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# Backwoods



# Home magazine

*practical ideas for self reliant living*

***Try some pasta desserts  
for unusual Holiday fare***

***Restoring furniture  
Quickie quilts  
Maintain a dirt road  
Winterizing animals  
Native American corn***

GUILDERS



## My view

### Thanks for not killing them

We're entering the season when traditionally we express our thanks to someone, often the Almighty, for something we feel fortunate in having, such as our fine family, our health, or perhaps just our turkey dinner. I've broadened my thankfulness this year to include the federal government, the Oregon National Guard, the Oregon State Police, the Salem (Oregon) SWAT team, and the Marion County (Oregon) Sheriff's Department.

I'm thankful to them for not killing some friends of mine, namely Paul Revere, founder of Embassy of Heaven Church, located in Marion County, Oregon, his lovely wife, Rachel, and their two charming daughters, Brooke, age 17, and Skye, age 14. The stage was certainly set for these police agencies to do so earlier this year. Just after dawn one January morning, dark-clad members of these agencies, equipped with an armored vehicle and carrying an assortment of automatic weapons, raided the church, breaking down doors, smashing windows, ordering the family and several other members of the church out of bed, and carrying Revere and other church members off to jail. After some desperate pleading from Rachel, they allowed the petrified daughters to stay in her care. At the jail, one of Revere's fingers was broken as he was forcibly fingerprinted.

The Revere family's crime was that they had failed to pay their property taxes, and Marion County officials, backed up by the law (the county had denied the church's request for tax-exempt status) and urged on by county officials who had demonized the church and its members as dangerous extremists, had orchestrated the raid to seize and confiscate the 34-acre church property for nonpayment of \$16,000 in taxes. The property had been valued at \$119,000.

When I read of the raid I was deeply troubled, and reminded of the bungled police raids at Ruby Ridge in Idaho during which the FBI managed to kill Randy Weaver's wife and son, and at Waco, Texas, during which 80 people, many of them children, were incinerated in a fire. I was troubled but grateful that the police had acted with enough restraint not to cause the death of any member of the Revere family or their church.

It struck me as absurd, but a sign of our tragic times, that I had to worry about friends of mine being killed by their own government. And I found it equally tragic that most of the newspaper and media accounts of the raid were sympathetic to the government agencies, not the Revere family. The Revere family and its church were, according to news accounts, extremists—and that modern day buzz word made them eligible for persecution, even death, at the hands of the government. What a disturbing world we live in when the

United States of America, of all countries, could so easily justify such a view.

I had come to know the Revere family at the various Preparedness Expos they had attended to spread their interpretation of the Bible. Revere, with wild beard and hair, certainly looked different from the clean-cut TV evangelist, or the well-groomed priest or minister. But rather than the hand-waving, impassioned preacher, he was a calm, considerate man who talked to whoever came up to his vendor's booth. Put simply, he believed in the Kingdom of Heaven and thought mankind owed allegiance only to that kingdom, and that we had no obligation to abide by the rules of any kingdom or government of this earth. His Embassy of Heaven Church had its own government. Revere refused to pay taxes of any kind, or even to apply to the government for a driver's license. Instead his church issued its own driver's licenses. Many of us at the Preparedness Shows thought Revere's beliefs peculiar, but not dangerous. He did not believe in violence and saw no use for firearms.

His daughters added a touch of refinement and elegance to the shows. Meticulously clad in long, flowing dresses, the beautiful and always smiling young ladies sold pencil-shaped packets of honey for a dollar as part of their effort to help their father's church. My daughter, Annie, whose age falls between that of the two girls, often joined them in tours of the aisles. The other vendors were always glad to see them; they brought gaiety and charm to the sometimes somber political mood of the shows.

When I saw Revere and his family at our most recent Preparedness Show, I greeted them with a much bigger than usual smile, because I knew I was lucky to have had the chance to greet them at all after their encounter with one of today's most dangerous entities—government. During the three-day show they did as they had done at previous shows: shared their homemade stews and cookies with me, tended my booth while I went off to conduct business with other show vendors, and generally made my stay at the show more pleasant. They have never tried to convert me to their beliefs, perhaps realizing I was beyond conversion to anything. And as at previous shows, they never asked for anything in return.

The Revere family has been homeless since that January raid. They have lived in a couple of trailers donated to them, on some land owned by a man they had ministered to while he was in prison. For this show, they were camped out at a friend's property. They are trying to get their former property back, but I am not hopeful for them. Revere still has that calm and composed defiance against worldly governments; if the governments who raided his church and took his property thought they broke Revere's spirit, they are wrong.

But the government has had the last say, in a worldly way, and these "extremists" have been put in their place. But at least, this time, the government didn't kill them. And for that, I guess I should say thanks. Δ

# You don't have to be a historian to make money writing your hometown's *Pictorial History*

By Robert L. Williams

Write a history book? I can hear the screams now from all over the country from people who hated, detested, loathed, and abominated history from the time it was inflicted upon them in junior high (nod middle) school, and with the passage of time the hatred has grown worse.

But wait! What is history today was nothing more than the juiciest gossip when it was happening. Think how people must have salivated when they snickered about how George Washington was first in war and first in peace, but he married a widow.

Think of Andrew Jackson and Rachel, who was (or wasn't) his wife because she was (was not) divorced from her husband. Or Ben Franklin who never really married Deborah and who once wrote that men should choose an old mistress because, in



*Churches will often provide or lend photos of congregations from many years ago, and the grown-up children or grandchildren will buy books.*

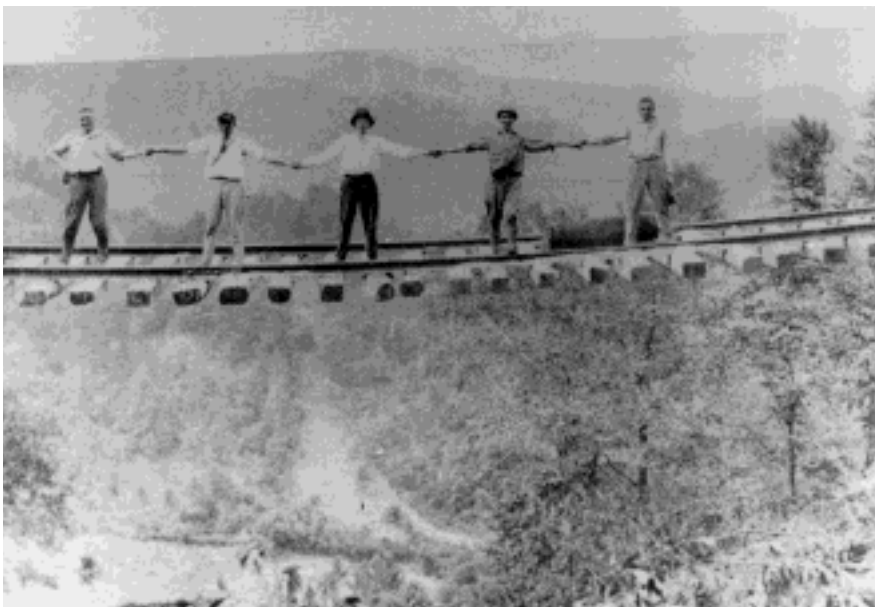
part, they are so grateful. What about Jefferson and his much whispered (but never grounded in fact) affair with a slave woman?

But the type of history discussed in this article is not the saga of great men accomplishing great deeds. The previous is here just to illustrate that history definitely is interesting to most people in one form or another.

The topic of this article is the *Pictorial History*. This is the book about your home town, or your county. Such a book is jammed with the narratives of local men and women who made their home town great or at least better.

But you are not a historian? That doesn't matter in the least. If you can take a story that was told to you by a friend and then tell that same story to another person without losing the vitality and accuracy of it, you can write *The Pictorial History* book.

What, exactly, is a pictorial history? It is a gathering of facts and photos of the earliest churches, the first settlers, the epochal periods of the town, the first and the finest of the town's houses, the arrival of the first automobiles and mills, major personalities, the



*A flood washed away the soil beneath the railroad tracks pictured here and these men are seen standing 200 feet in the air. Shots like this have a place in the book, even though the print is poor.*



*Some ancient photos are so gray that there is no contrast, but editors can work wonders with such shots.*

departure of the steam engine, the one-room schoolhouse, and the way of life that existed a century or three centuries earlier.

But since you were not around when these great events and people were the talk of the town, how can you write about them and secure photos? The easy way is to enlist the aid of the local historical society or museums, to gain access into private and personal collections, and to research old histories of the town or county. You will find that most historical societies are delighted by your attention and your plans to write a history of the community.

## **Finding a market**

First, though, you need to find a market and then learn about the strategies of writing—and selling—such a book. The first step is to contact some of the publishing houses that like to market pictorial histories. You can locate these firms best by going to your local library and checking into some of the books in the collection.

Once you have found the books (and most libraries will help you to secure a loan of such a book, if they are not

stocked) you can get the librarian to help you locate the address and proper contact persons at the company.

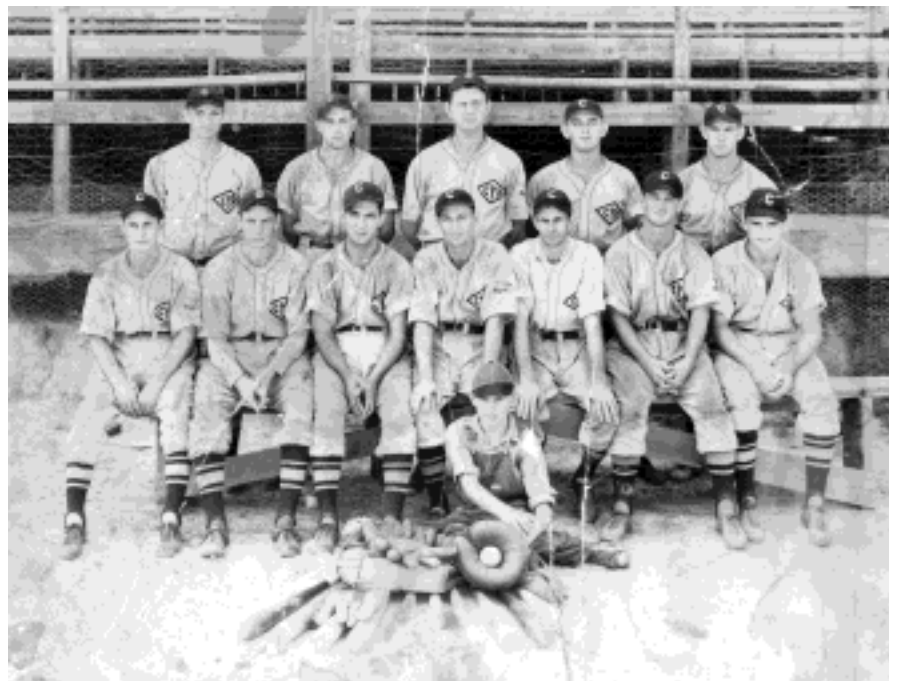
Make a proposal to the editor or publisher of the company and explain that you wish to produce such a book, and then state your qualifications. In many cases it is enough to state that

you are a long-time resident of the town or county and that you are an avid reader of local history. It is helpful to cite the names of prominent persons in town who will endorse you as a potential author.

It really doesn't matter whether you have been published before or not. Editors want you to be published, but they are not adamant on the topic. When I wrote my first pictorial history I had published several books and hundreds of articles and stories, but I never mentioned these to the editor. He asked me to submit a few sample pages and photos, with captions. A few days later he called me and offered me a contract to write the book.

Let's spend a few minutes talking about money before we go any further. Typically, you will receive 10 to 15 per cent of the revenues generated by the book.

Examine the figures. Suppose you get 15 per cent of the retail cost of the book. The book sells for \$35, so your cut from each book will be \$5.25. If the company prints 5,000 of the books



*Ancient photos of a town's baseball team when the Field of Dreams was almost a reality add greatly to the book and to the number of people who will buy it.*



and sells them all, your final take will be about \$26,000.

But that's not all. You can usually buy the books at half the retail cost and re-sell them. Suppose you buy 50 copies at \$17.50. You will have an investment of \$875. You need not buy them all at one time. You can buy a dozen for \$210 and sell them for \$420. That's a profit of \$210.

Plow the profit back into more books and sell them in the same manner. Keep doing this, and with each order you earn the \$210. If you now wish to order more copies, you will have an investment of only your profits, so you can't possibly lose money and you stand to gain quite a nice amount.

And that's still not all. When I wrote my first book of this sort, I contacted a nearby newspaper that wanted to make inroads into the community. I agreed to supply the paper with a series of human-interest stories about the community, and then I wrote to



*This damaged photo shows the first automobile ever in the county. Behind it is the town's first luxury hotel. Such shots are available through historical societies.*

the editor of a regional magazine and made the same deal.

and read the book. So books sales boom.

Local civic clubs invite you to speak at their meetings, and you can sell

### **Aftermarket sales**

I sold more than 150 stories to the newspaper and enjoyed an income of \$7,500 in ancillary sales. I then sold the stories to the magazine editor and marketed over 200 stories, for another gain of \$15,000. I then found national publications interested in two dozen of the stories and earned more than \$5,000 there.

That's more than \$27,000 in second-hand sales alone. I later parlayed three of the stories into full-length books and picked up another nice bit of change.

But don't the book publishers scream when the author sells material that the publisher is paying for?

Not at all. Look what happens.

The human interest story appears in the local paper and people read it with interest. The readers get to know your name and the types of stories you write. Later, when they realize that you have combined these stories into a book, they leap at the chance to buy



*Sometimes you can get permission to take a photo of a photo that is in someone else's book and get a printable copy. It's not the ideal way, but when the photo is that of a well above ground, it's worth the effort.*



*Be on hand for community celebrations. Here musket-bearing citizens "shoot in" the New Year, a tradition now observed in only a few towns in the nation. Notice the "fractured" air around the edge of the smoke cloud.*

## A Backwoods Home Anthology

books after the speech. Much of the time you will speak for only a free meal, but if you sell 20 of the books and realize a \$17.50 profit on each book, you have realized a net gain of \$350 for the meeting. You can buy a lot of anti-acid tablets with that kind of gravy.

Here's how the book publishers—at least some of them—like to work. The advance man comes into the community and meets with businessmen or community leaders and pitches the book as a real fund-raiser. The front man points out that the book will sell well because of the local angles, and all the community needs to do is come up with the cost of buying a set number of books.

The publisher may set his sights on an order of 5,000 books, which comes to a tall order. So the community leaders ask banks, local businesses, and other influential components of the town or city to act as sponsors.

As sponsors, the investors get their names prominently placed in the book, and many of them use the books as public relations tools to entice new businesses to come to town. So everyone wins.

### Writing the book

Now, you need to know more about the actual writing of the book. Go into the city or county archives or libraries



*Unique citizens and community leaders can be posed for special shots that guarantee the sale of many books.*



*Mill worker photos from a bygone age are wonderful for use in the book. This photo warranted a full page, and you can multiply the number of people in the photo by 10 (the number of relatives or friends who want their own copy of the book) and add the final figure to your bank account.*

and dig out the old histories. Meet with sons and daughters or at least the descendants of the early settlers. Ask to use old photos—the older the better. The publisher can work wonders with the ancient snapshots.

Do not take the photos away from the house. Take your camera along and take a picture of the pictures. Or hire a photographer to copy the photos for you. He will, of course, take a chunk of your money, but you may need to do this. If there are no photos, look for old paintings, drawings, sketches, or art works of any sort that you can photograph easily.

Go to old churches and ask to borrow their histories of their church and old photos. Go to City Hall. There are dozens of excellent sources for the photos and information.

Try to include every stratum of your society into the book. Put everyone's great-grandfather or great-grandmother into the book if possible. You'd be amazed at the number of people who will buy the books simply because there are several mentions of a loved one's name or photos of the loved one in the book.

The books are wonderfully easy to compile and write, and they earn a great deal of money along the way.

After the book is completed and sold, wait a few years—five or so—and ask the publisher about a re-print or a new edition of the book. You'll need to add about a dozen pages to the old text and a few photos of events or sites that have appeared since the first printing of the book.

So you work only a few hours and make several thousand more dollars.

Still don't like history? Then move over, because there are plenty of people who do—people who want to read another highly interesting book every night before going to bed.

Their bank book. Δ

*Government is like a baby. An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.*

**Ronald Reagan**  
**President of the United States**  
**1981-1989**

## For a unique taste treat and a lot of fun, grow Native American corn in your garden

By Jackie Clay

It used to be that when folks spoke of “Indian corn,” they meant those colorful ears of corn, hung up at the holidays, then put away for next year’s decoration. A person never really thought about eating Indian corn—that is, unless you were a Native American lucky enough to have a family which still raised traditional crops.

These people know that there is much more to native corn than “pretty,” as for centuries these corn varieties have provided a staple food for tribes across the continent. Most Native North Americans grew at least one kind of corn. Many grew several, as each variety has a use that suits it best, such as to grind for corn meal; to eat fresh, boiled or roasted; or to make into hominy.

The tribes each developed their special varieties, grown and improved through the generations, for taste, nutrition, size and beauty. (When compared to “modern” corns, it appears that the white man forgot beauty when developing corn varieties.) Most native corns are very pretty, and with as many differences among them as there are tribes. Even the Cherokee White Flour corn is a

glimmering gossamer white, not just plain white.

And the colors! From solid colors, such as the blue corns, each differing in size, shape and hue; reds, such as Mandan Red, Hopi Kokoma, Tarahumara Maize Rojo, and Copper

all the way north to the Canadian tribes.

So important was corn that many tribes were brought to a state of starvation by invading whites burning and otherwise destroying community cornfields. So personal an attachment did

Native Americans have to corn that it often was important in religious ceremonies and dances, and in many places, it still is today.

### Types of corn

Many folks grow corn today in their home gardens, but only use corn fresh, as “sweet corn,” boiled and eaten with butter and a sprinkle of salt. But when used only as sweet corn, people are missing out on many other uses.

Most of us use cornmeal. But store-bought cornmeal is not whole cornmeal,

as whole cornmeal will go stale quickly, just as whole wheat flour will. So the industry removes a portion of the corn kernel, which, unfortunately, removes much of the flavor.

There are literally hundreds of Native American flour corn varieties, some closely related and others very different from other flour corns, but each provides great corn for grinding, and all is able to be easily grown in nearly anyone’s garden.

In the past, as well as in some remote traditional areas today, corn was ground by crushing it beneath a



*Examples of some of the colorful varieties of Native American corn.  
From left to right, Santo Domingo blue, Hernandez red mix,  
Santo Domingo rainbow, and Navajo market unnamed beaked.*

Cristalino, as well as copper, burgundy and even pink; the multicolored corns, such as Hopi Chinmark, Mandan Bride, and Tarahumara Serape; and even corn in gold and white.

Grown for subsistence, corn, squash (including pumpkins), and beans make up the “Three Sisters” in native gardens across the continent. Corn was very important to most tribes, not only as food, but as trading material. It was through trading that corn found its way from southern Mexico, where it was domesticated around 2000 B.C.,





*The three sisters of Native American culture—squash, beans, and corn, which are staples in most tribes*

stone that was rubbed back and forth on the kernels which rested on another flat stone. In southwestern and Mexican areas, this is called the *mano* and *metate*. In today's kitchens the whole, field-dried kernels can be ground to an excellent corn meal by using a home grain mill. A couple of handfuls of dried corn and five minutes worth of grinding will provide enough fresh cornmeal for a great cornbread complete with wonderful corn taste and full of nutrition. Luckily, with reasonable care, field-dried corn kernels will stay fresh-tasting practically forever. Native Americans in the past depended on it to store well in case of crop failure or hail destroying a year's crop.

Varieties called flour corn are *not* the only "flour corns." Each variety produces its own flour with distinct texture, color, and taste. One must sample many kinds to choose a favorite.

Many flour corns may be boiled "green" (at the sweet corn stage, where there is milk in the kernel when it is pierced by a thumbnail), or eaten roasted at the same stage. Our favorite method of roasting the ears is to dip the fresh unhusked ears briefly in spring water, then quickly shake and

lay on a bed of glowing coals. When the ears are steaming and the husks a bit charred, we turn them and break out the butter. One can scarcely wait for the husks to cool enough to handle. The roasted ears have a distinct smokey barbecue taste. As kids, we used to sneak a few ears out of the cornfield by the house and roast them well out of sight. There was never better eating, anywhere.

Closely related to many of the flour corns are the hominy corns or posole corns. Often folks who "hate" hominy, the soggy, nearly tasteless canned corn product bought at the supermarket, love fresh hominy. Hominy is simply field-dried corn kernels boiled in lime water until the outer layer or "skin" of the corn softens and can be loosened. (This makes the corn softer and more tender to chew, as well as adding nutrients.) The old people boil the kernels with ashes to gain the same effect, rinsing well after boiling.

This cleaned hominy or posole corn may be added to stews, eaten alone, or dried and ground to make *masa harina de maiz*—corn flour. This greatly differs from corn meal. Corn meal is more gritty textured since it contains the hull which is removed in the hominy process. *Masa* is also more silky and flour-like and is used for corn cakes, tortillas and tamales. Like everything else, homemade *masa* is far superior to commercial products, and you know what is in it.

Native Americans used two types of parched corn. The one most folks know about is the "corn nuts" type of product which is heated until it puffs up but does not pop. Traditionally the



*Hopi chinmark flour corn ready to grind in a traditional metate. In the basket are Cherokee white flour corn, flor de rio, and Santo Domingo blue. In the jar is sweet corn (yuman), boiled and dried*



corn was heated in a basket of very hot sand until it puffed up. The same effect can be had by placing a handful of field-dried kernels in a cast iron frying pan over a stove burner without oil and stirring the kernels until they puff. This makes a crunchy, toasted-corn tasting treat.

The parched corn we use is simply boiled or roasted green corn, cut off the cobs, and dried until crunchy. It has a delicate nutty taste, and it is very filling on a trip. A little goes a long way—like jerky. The two, eaten in combination, make a good meal on a journey.

Of course, the most common Native American corn is popcorn. Modern popcorns may pop up bigger, but native popcorns are cornier. Usually chosen for popping abilities, native popcorns are often smaller kernels from smaller plants but very full of taste.

## **Some native varieties you can try growing**

One benefit of growing native corns is that they are well adapted to less than ideal growing conditions. For instance, some northern flour corns, such as Mandan and Iroquois corns, have been bred for colder climates, such as North Dakota and the Northeast, allowing them to mature in a shorter growing season. Others, such as Hopi, Navajo, and Tarahumara corns, tolerate much drought and hot, dry winds, and still produce a good crop.

Remember too that all Native American corn varieties are open pollinated, allowing a gardener to save seed for next year's crop and pass on to friends and family.

Remember that corn cross-pollinates very easily, and that to keep your seed pure and make sure you get the taste and look you are after, isolate each variety by *at least* a quarter mile, or stagger planting dates so that varieties with like dates of pollination are planted at least two weeks apart.

On our ranch, we are a bit creative, planting early varieties next to late ones, then staggering the planting dates as well. This allows us to grow 10 varieties on our 100 acres. But we always hold our breath, as many outside factors can change the time a corn plant produces pollen.

Many types of blue corn are on the market. Unfortunately, some of those found in seed catalogs are not great tasting, being commercial sports of old varieties. Our favorite is Santo Domingo Blue, which produces a huge ear of dark blue flour corn. Luckily, it also gives us great taste as well. The plants are large, stocky, and stand up well to the wind, tolerating drought quite a bit. Black Aztec is also a good "blue" corn, having a nutty taste. It gives the added bonus of being a great sweet corn when picked green in the milk stage. The Black Aztec plants are smaller than those of Santo Domingo Blue but still large and sturdy. Both blues produce two good ears per stalk.

The blue corns are often used to provide corn meal which is used for cornbread, corn cakes, or ground for masa and used for blue corn tortilla chips.

We grow many Cherokee crops, as my husband Bob is of Cherokee ancestry. Our favorite corn is Cherokee White Flour corn, a very tall, husky plant, producing very large ears of fat, glimmering white kernels. In addition to being an excellent producer of sweet field-dried kernels, which we grind and also use as hominy, Cherokee White Flour corn is excellent used as roasting ears and not so bad eaten as boiled sweet corn.

Another of our favorite flour corns is Hopi Chinmark, an absolutely gorgeous native corn. The ears are basically red and orange, speckled with cream kernels and now and then we find a few solid cream colored ears in the field. But the clincher for beauty is the presence of "chinmarks." The corn was given this name because the stripes on each kernel resemble the ceremonial markings of paint,

streaked on the chin with three fingers of a hand before war, a dance, or other important occasion. The chinmarks give the individual kernels great beauty and make the ear breathtaking. This variety is great for corn meal which seems to glow in the jar. It is also eaten roasted and parched.

Our favorite native sweet corn is Yuman, which is a smallish ear of very sweet, tender kernels. The color is whitish with orange kernels as the corn reaches the milk or sweet corn stage, and it turns to yellow and red, with chinmarks, as it field-dries. The plants are about 4½ to 5 feet tall, smallish, but quite hardy. (We had a planting endure 29 degree temperatures and survive uncovered.)

Another favorite of ours is Chemehuevi, which is a very quick maturing sweet and corny tasting variety. The plants are small but tolerate drought and wind quite well. The kernel is white during the milk stage, but as the ear matures, it colors from yellow to pink with a few stripes.

As I've said, Black Aztec is not only a good blue flour corn, but is excellent as a sweet corn, eaten in the milk stage. The ears are basically white, with a few blue kernels sprinkled in. We think it makes an interesting addition to a meal, with the color variation. As the corn matures, the color darkens, until it is a glossy black.

## **Popcorn**

Popcorn is our favorite snack food and treat, so it isn't unusual that we grow at least four medium sized rows for home use. Cochiti is one of our favorites, having medium sized glossy ears of little plump kernels. It does have a short maturity date, for popcorn, of about 89 days, which is a definite plus in many areas.

## **Saving seeds**

Luckily, open pollinated corn is very easy to save seed from. But as I've said, corn is very easy to cross breed,

so you have to not only watch the pollination times of your corn at home, but that of neighbors—up to a mile away, especially upwind from you. While most crossbred corns are good to eat, it does no good to save the seed as you will not be sure of what you will end up with the next year. (You don't want to grow field corn when you were expecting flour corn. While it's edible, it may not be as good as you'd like.)

Let all corn varieties mature and at least partially dry on the stalk. If the weather is not cooperating and damp weather threatens, pick the partially dried ears (the husks are now tan and rustle when the wind blows), open the husks, and allow the ears to thoroughly dry in a protected area, such as a barn loft, attic, or garage. Keep an eye on the ears as mice can do great damage in a short time.

When the kernels are hard and very dry, you can rub two ears together over a container and easily shell the corn off the cob. (If you have the room, and plan on long-term storage, leaving the kernels on the dry cob will give better results.)

After the kernels are shelled, it is a good idea to thoroughly stir the kernels which evenly distributes any moisture, preventing mold from forming. I love to stir a garbage can full of corn kernels with my bare arm. Such a wonderful feel.

Store all corn, shelled or cob, in a dry place, protected from dust, rodents, and insects. It will keep a very long time. Once ground though, corn should be used quickly as it will go rancid if left unused.

There is no reason that native corns can not be planted in rows, as one commonly sees "modern" corn planted. Like all corn, though, a person should plant at least four rows in a block to ensure proper pollination, even if due to space restrictions, it must be a very short block. My mother plants her native sweet corn in a four-foot by four-foot block, and it

produces very well, with the plants only six inches apart. There are many native traditional planting methods with which one may want to experiment. For instance, in the Southwest, the Hopi plant their entire field in a waffle pattern, a series of six-foot square basins which not only conserves any rainfall, but protects the tender young plants from the harsh, dry wind.

Some desert tribes plant their corn in rows, but the rows are 10 feet apart and the little groups of corn plants, four to six feet apart. To some, it looks wasteful, but it is very hard to grow corn on what one might think of as a sand dune and desert tribes have learned what works and what does not.

The Cherokee commonly grew corn in hills, about a pace apart, in which were also planted pole beans, which climbed the corn stalk. In cold, wet climates, corn was also planted in

hills, but the hills tended to be higher and larger, perhaps the beginning of the "raised bed" concept.

We try to use mainly varieties and methods which are used by the old Native American peoples in our area, concluding that the crops have been developed to our weather patterns and the cultivation practices commonly used here. But we also grow other native varieties of corn here and have had great success doing so. So, if you are like us and like to experiment as well as eat great food, give a few of the Native American corns a try. Your family will be glad you did.

(Some sources for Native American corn seed are Seed Dreams, 231 Fair Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 — free catalog; Native Seeds/SEARCH, 2509 N. Campbell Ave. #325, Tucson, AZ 85719 — catalog \$1; Seed Saver Exchange, RR3 Box 239, Decorah, IA 52101 — free information; Garden City Seeds, 778 Highway 93 North, Hamilton, MT 59840 — free catalog.) Δ

### *A country moment*



*Zachary Roberecki, age 2, of Winnipeg, Canada, plays in the snow.*



# Plant your Irish potatoes this fall or winter

By Robert L. Williams

**M**y family has made a practice of planting Irish potatoes in the fall rather than in the early spring. We tried it both ways for many years and our conclusions are that, season after season, fall planting seems to work better for us.

Here's an illustration: last spring we dutifully planted our potatoes in March, which is about as early as we can work the land successfully. We planted the spuds six inches deep, and then we waited.

And waited. And waited.

In April the first signs of growth appeared, and in the cool spring the plants grew, barely noticeably. When the really warm days of May arrived the potato plants put on a growth spurt that was truly gratifying.

And in June, believe it or not, we had a series of freezes and the plants were killed back by frost. They never made a come-back. The entire potato patch was a total loss of time, energy, and a small amount of money.

## Winter or fall planting

Now take a look at winter or fall planting. As soon as all the summer garden crops have been harvested, we till our potato patch and make our winter planting. When the soil is loose and well pulverized, we dig deep rows—eight to ten inches. If you wish, you can use shallow rows and later pile dirt onto the top of the planted taters.

With the deep row open and ready, we fill the bottom of the row with dead leaves (You've been raking leaves from the yard anyhow, and this is a fine way to dispose of them), or we use pine needles. It's good to have at least four or five inches of this dead matter in the bottom of the row.

Then set the potato eyes or cuttings in the row on top of the dead vegetable matter. It works better if you use whole spuds, particularly if you have some small ones that are really too little for good table use. Set the small potatoes a foot apart in the rows.

Now cover the potatoes with another layer of dead leaves, well-rotted sawdust, or other organic mulch material. You can use grass clippings or any other mulch available. Then add the necessary dirt to fill the row and even hill up the row slightly.

Admittedly, this type of gardening is a little harder, takes a little longer, and seems to be a total flop. But wait till spring and see the difference.

During the depths of winter the snows and rains will cause the mulch materials to decay and, as the mulch decays, warmth is generated, just as green hay or green sawdust will generate heat as it decays. The heat is generated for several weeks or even months, depending upon the amount of mulch used, and causes the potato sets to begin their growth cycle so that the roots begin to grow. The second layer of mulch and the dirt on top of it prevents the heat from escaping rapidly, while the soil on top is too cold for the plants to emerge from the soil. Small potatoes start to form very early, and they will grow all winter.

Obviously, the classic manure can be used as well, but this type of material tends to burn the roots of the tender plants. If you use manure, mix it with a generous amount of rotted sawdust or dead leaves.

When the weather is warm enough, the leaves of the plants will shoot forth, and because there is already a great root system the plants will be hardier and will grow faster. We asked a neighbor, a farmer, why the plants grow faster, and he gave us his theory:

The plant when young has a struggle, he says, to provide enough nutrition and growth power for both roots and shoots to grow, and the result is that both are often weak and fragile, more vulnerable to insects and cold snaps.

If the roots are already established, the growth energy can be used by the above-ground plant without robbing the tubers below the soil.

You can add a small amount of commercial fertilizer, if you wish, by sprinkling it along the rows. But the decayed mulch is providing its own fertilizer power by this time. The results are that by very early spring (unless you live in a frigid part of the country) you will have large, sound, beautiful potatoes long before your neighbors have any to harvest.

And this is only part of the beauty of winter potatoes. Because the early growth is done underground in cool weather, the above-ground plants will mature earlier than they would in the usual form of gardening, and you will be ready to harvest before the insects above and below the soil surface appear to devour plants and tubers.

A bonus of this type of planting is that the crop is harvested early enough that you have time to have a second or even a third crop on the same plot of land, especially if you live in an area where the growing seasons are longer.

I confess that I don't know how this system will work where the winters are brutal. What succeeds in the Piedmont of North Carolina may not be successful in Minnesota or Montana or Maine.

Give it a try this winter, but you may wish to try only a small patch of potatoes until you see how the system works. If you are pleased by the results, then next season try it on your larger potato patches. Δ

# Protect your chickens from predators by installing this novel electric fence

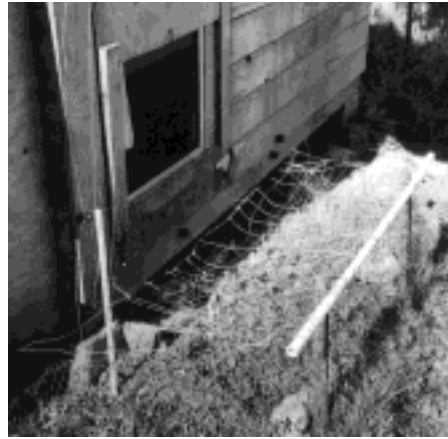
By Carol Kuehn

Chickens are defenseless critters and need protection, especially at night, if you keep them in rural areas where predators are numerous. Here the main midnight marauders are raccoons, and seeing the destruction they can do to a flock on one night raid makes strong housing a real necessity. One morning after walking to the silent hen house and seeing the chickens brutalized with breast-bites taken from each, I realized the necessity of impenetrable housing.

I had already boarded up all the holes, as raccoons can get through amazingly small openings, and I had spent many years closing the door at dusk, after counting to make sure all the chickens were in, and then opening the door at dawn to let them out. I had also learned that chicken wire was no barrier to raccoons; solid wood construction and welded wire are all they respect.

But the hen house is a long walk from my house, and this routine got old fast, so I thought about an automatic way to protect my friends and found the solution in electrically charged fencing. I considered surrounding the whole acre of chicken yard with hot wire but realized that the door to the house was the place to put protection. Chickens learn to go into their house to roost at night and I took advantage of this habit.

I bought a 12-volt fence charger, a battery, an inexpensive regulator, and a small photovoltaic (PV) panel to mount on the south side of the hen house roof. The battery and regulator are inside the house and the charger is outside so I can turn it off when I want to go in. The door is about 18 inches above ground level, and I cut a small opening in it to allow access for chick-



*One end of the wire mesh in front of this chicken house door is connected to a fence charger. A predator standing on the ground, touching the mesh, completes the circuit and gets a shock.*

ens. Next I constructed the hot barrier, the grid of charged wires in front of the door. Two wooden stakes in the ground, about two feet out from the door and the same height, were connected at the top with a piece of PVC pipe between them. I nailed insulators to the wood just below the door and ran a wire from one side to the other, extending 10 inches beyond the opening. Then it was easy to construct a grid of wire from the PVC pipe to the wire on the house. I made a loose weave with wires about four inches apart and connected one end to the battery. A low shed attached to the house near the door seemed like a possible jumping place for predators so I ran hot and ground wires up and around the whole door.

My chickens jump up onto the PVC pipe and then jump into their door opening. They can stand on the hot wires and not get shocked as they are not grounded. If raccoons come they can't leap across the grid, and get a good shock when they touch the wires. They can't balance on the PVC pipe and can't walk across the loose

grid. I turn off the power when I go in to feed or collect eggs, just so I won't accidentally touch the wires and shock myself. A low run of chicken wire around the whole grid keeps hens from scooting underneath and getting a shock while grounded.

Ha! I did it! The 'coons are foiled and my chickens are safe at night without the routine of closing and opening their door. It's worked for many years and the only maintenance is keeping water in the battery and weeds from the hot wires. Δ

## Historical Notes

(The following was written by Professor Alexander Tyler approximately 200 years ago while our 13 colonies were still a part of Great Britain. He was writing about the fall of the Athenian Republic over 2,000 years earlier):

*A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through this sequence: From bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from courage to liberty; from liberty to abundance; from abundance to selfishness; from selfishness to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependency; and from dependency back again into bondage.*

(From the pundit Montesquieu):  
"Republics end through luxury;  
monarchies through poverty."



## Herbs make your canned and frozen foods more appealing

By Doris E. Stebbins

Does the prospect of canning again leave you uninspired, with the knowledge that by mid-winter your family will tire of that hum-drum, everyday flavor of canned vegetables? Do you wish there was a way to “pep them up,” to magically change all those jars of your labor of love into “something specials” to spark up your family’s appetite? My solution is easy...I drop in an herb or two before sealing the jars.

Tomatoes will likely fill the majority of your jars. Assure your supply of Vitamin C by quartering large tomatoes (can smaller ones whole or halved) and press each piece down firmly with a wooden spoon, extracting the juice. Add ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon sugar per pint (1 teaspoon of each for quarts), letting the juice from the tomatoes fill the jar to about ½ inch from the top, instead of filling the jar with hot water. Process as usual. For an herbal tone, add a leaf or two of sweet basil to each jar before sealing (two leaves to a quart gives just the right tang). Add lemon basil to yellow tomatoes for mellow richness. I find this excellent for tomato juice. Lovage, with its rich celery tang, also goes well in canned tomatoes and tomato juice.

Canned peas are always a favorite, but you might try canning some with lemon basil, chervil, or summer savory.

Add a few leaves of chervil to baby carrots, and they’ll look just as pretty as they are delicious. Others might be spiced with thyme, dill, or sweet fennel. Mint-flavored carrots are ready for glazing simply by opening the jar.

Add dill, fennel, or tarragon to baby beets, removing the green sprig before serving.

Eliminate the “canned taste” of green beans by tucking in a sprig of

summer savory. This “bean herb” permeates the beans and preserves the fresh garden flavor that’s so appealing to vegetable lovers. One caution, however: be careful not to overdo it. Too much of any herb can be undesirable. The herb flavor should not overpower the vegetable, only serve to bring out the fresh garden flavor. Work out your own family preferences.

Summer squash is delicious when cut in ¼" to ½" slices, adding ½ teaspoon salt to each pint jar, together with a small sprig of dill. To cook, I dip the drained slices in egg batter, roll in a mixture of cornmeal and flour (or bread crumbs) and fry crispy-brown. A sprinkling of fresh chives or scallion tops, and perhaps a few thin slices of green or sweet red peppers while frying, gives it a gourmet zing.

Fruits can also take on a tasty touch with the addition of sweet herbs. Add a sprig of pineapple sage, spearmint, or lemon balm to pears. Can apple-sauce or sliced apples with mint, anise, or rose geranium; rhubarb with angelica. Add lemon basil or pineapple sage to raspberries, or pineapple sage or lemon balm to citron preserves; sweet basil to rhubarb or rhubarb/apricot preserves, and rose geranium to cherries.

The same combinations can also be applied to enhancing the flavor of frozen foods. Let your family be “taste testers” by putting up just a few containers of herb-flavored varieties the first season. You can also freeze the herbs separately in small cartons and use them with the vegetables as you cook them.

If the herb vinegars from the gourmet shelf at the market are pleasing to you, why not put up a few jars of your own for yourself and for Christmas giving? They are simple to make, being infusions of the herbs in

vinegars for a specific period of time. Everyone has his favorites—but I like them all. Tarragon is a handy vinegar to have on the shelf, and mint vinegar is excellent to spice up fruit salads and sauces for lamb.

To make these vinegars, cut the leafy tips of herbs just before blooming. Wash quickly and shake off water. Bruise between palms or with a potato masher and loosely fill a wide-mouth jar. If seeds are used, bruise them before adding.

Pour vinegar over the herbs in the jar and let stand in a warm place for two or three weeks. Place wax paper over the top before putting on the lid to prevent the vinegar from corroding the metal. (A plastic bowl cover may also be used.) After two weeks, smell and taste the vinegar; if it’s not strong enough, let it stand another few days. When the desired strength is reached, strain it through a piece of muslin and bottle it. Cork tightly. (Syrup and honey bottles are nice for this.)

**Mint vinegar:** Use for flavoring lamb sauce, by sweetening to taste with powdered sugar or honey. Stir a little into whipped cream or mayonnaise for fruit salads. **Tarragon Vinegar:** Use white wine or distilled vinegar. Use to spice up dressings for hot and cold fish and seafood. **Mixed Herb Vinegar:** Use cider or white wine vinegar and a combination of any desired herbs. Below are some that go especially well together: 1. Two quarts vinegar, five parts basil, one part thyme, one part marjoram, six cloves garlic, sliced. 2. One part sweet basil, one part lemon thyme, one part rosemary, one part crushed celery seed, peel of a lemon with pith removed. 3. Two parts tarragon, one part fennel seed, one part chervil, one part thyme, one part burnet, garlic. (Wonderful with fish!) 4. Burnet with a few cloves garlic for cucumber-flavored vinegar. (Favored by those who cannot eat cucumbers.) Δ

## Try these pasta desserts for unusual holiday fare

By Richard Blunt

In my mom's kitchen, any type of pasta, regardless of its size, shape, or color, was called a noodle. She never really had the time nor the patience to make her own fresh noodles. But that wasn't really necessary, anyway. Her incredible talent as a cook was enough to make the dry pasta from the supermarket taste as good as any fresh pasta I have ever eaten, including my own. Besides, experience has taught me that commercially-made dry pasta is, with a few exceptions, a high quality product. It is often better and more nutritious than retail fresh pastas.

When someone would ask my mom why she made so many noodle dishes, she simply said, "Noodles are cheap, easy to cook, and you don't need a root cellar to keep them on hand." But if you could see the mountain of noodle recipes she kept in a large grey metal box, separate from other recipes, you would understand that there was more to it than that.

She was never at a loss when preparing pasta. Her ability to successfully incorporate almost any food, fresh or left-over, into her recipes made every noodle dish a success. On certain Jewish holidays, she would prepare several noodle kugels, (kugel means pudding in Yiddish) and send them to neighbors she knew would not be able to find the time to prepare a special dessert. On Thanksgiving and Christmas she often prepared a special noodle dessert for friends who were coming to dinner.

Each year, as the holidays approach, I start searching through my mom's noodle recipes looking for a special dessert to make for my family. In this issue, I'll give you some of these special holiday desserts to share with your family and friends during the holidays.

As you read on, please remember that in Nanna V's kitchen; the word is "noodle," not pasta. For those of you wondering what the V stands for, my mother's name was Virginia Lee. My children liked the sound of Nanna V better because it rhymed with her name, and it always brought a smile to her face.

Today, the average American eats about 20 pounds of pasta a year. The great bulk of this consumption is the commercially made long strand and flat ribbon varieties. Many of these dry pastas are represented by Italian names. The long strand varieties are broadly classified as spaghetti and have been dubbed with names like bucatini, capellini, fusilli, perciatelli, and vermicelli. The flat ribbon varieties, commonly called fettuccine, also sport Italian varietal names like lasagna, fettuccine, tacconelli, papardelli and tagliatelli. These very popular varieties are followed closely by the



*Richard Blunt*

tubular pastas and short ribbon macaroni, the most familiar of which are mostaccioli, penne, rigatoni, and ziti.

Other pasta varieties that have shown increased popularity over the past 20 years, especially among the fresh pasta fans, are the pasta dumplings and other soft dough pastas. Unlike the dried commercial pastas, these versatile dumpling and irregular shaped soft pastas usually sport a name consistent with their gastronomic roots. A few that come to mind are gnocchi (Italy), spätzle (Germany), knöpfli (Switzerland), and nockerl (Hungary). When you combine these popular varieties to the long list of Asian noodles and soup pastas, you will find that there are more than 600 varieties of pasta with more being created all the time. Most of these varieties, in all of their shapes and sizes, can be found somewhere in this country distributed in supermarkets and specialty stores, or ordered from mail order houses.

These are impressive statistics when you consider that pasta has been popular in this country for less than 100 years. When Thomas Jefferson returned in 1789 after completing his ambassadorial assignment in France, he brought with him America's first commercial pasta machine, along with a box of dried macaroni. But it wasn't until after the first wave of immigration from southern Italy in the 1920s that pasta was introduced into this country on a large scale. Pasta continued its rise in popularity as vacationers and soldiers returned from Europe and Asia after the world wars.

For everyday cooking, very few foods equal the versatility of pasta, even in this modern world of multicultural cuisines. As my mom said, noodles are inexpensive, take up little storage space, and can be prepared by simply placing them in a pot of boiling water and cooking them for a short time. Pasta also mates well with almost any other available



food and can be served as an appetizer, first course, main course, or dessert.

Folks in many parts of the world, especially in the United States and Italy, tend to think of pasta as a quintessentially Italian food. This is natural because, of all of the other cultures that use pasta, none have elevated it to the glory as is found in Italy which has a per capita consumption of about 65 pounds of pasta per year. But pasta is not just Italian; it is indigenous to other nations also. Orientals eat almost as much pasta as the Italians do with a per capita consumption of about 40 pounds per year. The cuisines of Central and Eastern Europe, Turkey, Africa, Greece, and Mexico, to name just a few, all contain classic dishes that call for some form of pasta as a primary ingredient. In Mexico the comida (main meal of the day) consists of several courses. The middle course is often a “soupa seca” or dry soup made with either rice or pasta. Despite the fact that it is called a soup, a soupa seca closely resembles a traditional Italian “piatto primo,” or first course pasta dish. The distinctive difference is how it is prepared. In soupa seca the pasta is first fried in oil, then slowly stewed in a sauce made with fresh tomatoes, garlic, onions, and chili peppers until tender.

Spätzle is a classic example of a true regional variety of pasta, with its origin in southwestern Germany where the dough is still made by hand and the individual spätzles are cut straight into boiling water.

Central Europe is famous for its wide variety of noodle puddings and stuffed pasta dumplings, and in Africa an entire cuisine has developed around several varieties of couscous, a granular pasta made with water and the finest semolina or other flour.

## Some uncertain history

For years there has been a great deal of bluster over who invented and subsequently popularized pasta. The story of Marco Polo discovering noodles during his visit to China, then introducing this new food to Italy when he returned home, is not founded in reliable history. Some theorize that the Venetian never made it to China at all but got hung up in Persia, where he concocted a vivid fantasy about the court of Kublai Khan and the discovery of pasta from information he heard from Persian merchants who knew China well. There is evidence that leads food historians to believe that noodles made from wheat, buckwheat, rice, and soya did exist in China long before the purported arrival of Marco Polo.

There are many theories that place the origins of pasta in other parts of the world, but unfortunately nothing is certain. Along with China and Italy, Japan, Korea, France, and Germany also make claims to inventing and popularizing pasta.

So, if Marco Polo didn't discover pasta in the Orient and bring it back to the West, who really invented it? I have a

theory that makes more sense to me than most of the complicated babble I have read; I call it, “The Spontaneous Innovation of Noodles” theory. Therein I propose that pasta, in all of its glory, arose from the world's general populace in many places, at many times, without help or guidance from experts. And that's all there is to it.

But now, I think it is time to pay a visit to Nanna V's world of holiday noodle desserts, many of which are appropriate for this time of year.

## Pasta desserts

When baked in puddings, pasta makes a delicious and festive dessert. Noodle puddings are as popular in European and Middle Eastern countries as bread pudding is in this country.

I grew up in a neighborhood where many of my neighbors were immigrants from Central and Western Europe, and every family had its own special noodle pudding that was reserved for holidays and other special occasions. After searching through my mom's giant, old recipe box for several hours, I found 25 different noodle pudding recipes. For this column I have selected the one that she prepared most often. There were four others that, though similar, were not quite the same, but they are a sign that Mom was constantly reworking this original recipe to suit her ever changing taste preferences, or to match the ingredients she had on hand at the time. But I know this to be her most recent favorite because, when I served it to my children a few weeks ago, Sarah complimented me with, “This tastes almost as good as Nanna V's, Dad.” I will prepare this pudding again, very soon. “Almost as good” is not good enough for me.

## Apple and noodle pudding

### Ingredients for the pudding:

2 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup whole milk  
pinch Kosher salt  
4 oz. wide egg noodles (broken into one-inch pieces)  
3 large eggs, separated  
5 Tbsp. butter or margarine  
<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup sugar  
1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp. pure vanilla extract  
2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cups freshly sliced pie apples (rome, cortland, northern spey, fugi, or granny smith)

### Ingredients for the topping:

2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Tbsp. all purpose flour  
<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup light brown sugar  
<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup granulated sugar  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
4 Tbsp. butter or margarine

**Method:**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray the inside of a large baking dish with nonstick cooking spray and set it aside. Substitute butter, margarine, or shortening if you don't use cooking spray.

2. To prepare the topping, combine the flour, sugars, and cinnamon. Cut in the butter with a pastry blender until the mixture becomes crumbly, then set the topping aside. The flour is to keep the topping from collapsing into a puddle on the dessert.

3. To prepare the pudding, combine the milk and the salt in a sauce pan. Bring the mixture to a slow simmer over low heat, add the broken noodles and cook until they are just tender. Set the pan aside to cool without removing the noodles.

4. While the noodles are cooling, separate the egg yolks from the whites. Cream the butter, sugar, and vanilla in a large bowl until well blended. Add the egg yolks and beat until the mixture is well blended and has a light texture.

5. In a separate bowl beat the egg whites until stiff.

6. Gently stir the butter, sugar, vanilla, and egg yolk mixture into the cooled noodles and milk, then gently fold in the beaten egg whites.

7. Pour this custard mixture into the prepared baking dish, and arrange the apples on top. Evenly sprinkle the topping over the apples.

8. Bake the pudding on the middle rack in the oven for about 45 minutes or until the custard is just set. Serve the pudding right from the oven or let it cool for a few minutes and serve it warm.

My mom would eat this pudding cold from the refrigerator, but I think it loses some subtle flavor when it gets cold. Be your own judge.

## **Fruit and nut lasagna**

Sweet lasagnas, with apples, raisins, nuts, and sweet cream butter, layered on pasta sheets, are traditionally served on Christmas Eve in the northeastern provinces of Italy. I have been fascinated with this curious and unique dessert idea for years. So I have developed a couple of sweet lasagna recipes of my own.

During the fall the Blunt family spends nearly every weekend visiting orchards, cranberry bogs, and fruit stands. We pick enough fruit and berries to satisfy my children's insatiable appetites for fresh fruit. We usually have enough left over for my wife and me to process into enough jams, jellies, marmalades, conserves, fruit butters, and stewed fruits to last us until the next fall picking season.

In this recipe I use one of my favorite and most versatile conserves. During the holidays, and at other times as well, I serve this conserve as a relish with poultry and pork, as well as a topping for ice cream. However, if fruit and nut conserves are not to your liking you can substitute a 21-ounce

can of any variety of pie filling with this recipe and still get excellent results. But before you make the decision to prepare this conserve, I must caution you: If you have any children in the house between the ages of 2 and 90, expect to find one or more of them walking around the kitchen some day, eating this stuff straight from the jar.

**Fruit and nut conserve ingredients:**

8 oz. fresh or frozen cranberries  
2 firm, ripe red delicious, macintosh or any other eating apple (peeled, cored and coarsely chopped)  
1 orange (unpeeled, seeded, and coarsely chopped)  
2½ cups firmly packed light brown sugar  
½ tsp. ground cinnamon  
½ tsp. fresh ground nutmeg  
¼ tsp. ground cardamom  
5 oz. pecans, coarsely chopped

**Method:**

1. Combine all the ingredients, except for the nuts, in a bowl, cover, and let stand for two hours.

2. Transfer the mixture to a heavy-bottom sauce pot and bring to a simmer over low heat. Simmer the mixture, stirring frequently for 30 minutes, then bring the mixture to a slow boil for 15 minutes or until it is very thick.

3. Stir in the nuts and set the finished conserve, covered, in the refrigerator for one hour to allow it to cool and set.

**Lasagna ingredients:**

6 2-inch wide dry Lasagna noodles

**Topping ingredients:**

½ cup light brown sugar  
⅓ cup quick cooking old fashioned oats  
¼ cup all purpose flour  
¼ cup pecans (chopped fine)  
¼ cup butter or margarine  
¼ tsp. fresh ground nutmeg  
⅛ tsp. cinnamon

**Filling ingredients:**

1 lb. cream cheese (low fat or fat free)  
¼ cup granulated sugar  
2 large eggs  
½ cup plain yogurt (low fat or fat free)  
1⅓ cups fruit and nut filling

**Method:**

1. Over high heat bring a pot of water large enough to cook the lasagna noodles to a boil. Cook the noodles until they are ¾ done, then add enough cold water to the pot to stop the cooking process. Carefully remove the noodles



from the cool water and let them to drain for a short time. Lay them side by side on wax paper to prevent them from sticking together and cover them with damp paper towels.

2. Combine all the ingredients for the topping in a bowl and blend them with a pastry blender. The finished mix will have a moist lumpy consistency and the butter will be evenly distributed. Do not overwork the mixture. If you don't have a pastry blender, you can work the ingredients with your fingers until blended. Be careful not to overwork it as it will break down.

3. To prepare the filling, use an electric mixer to blend the cream cheese with the sugar until the sugar is completely incorporated.

4. Combine the eggs with the yogurt and mix lightly with a fork. Add this to the cream cheese and sugar and blend in the mixer at medium speed until the two are completely incorporated. (The fruit and nut filling will be added in the assembly steps.)

#### **Assembly and baking:**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Butter an 11- by 7- by 1½-inch baking dish (a 2 quart Pyrex casserole) and spread 2/3 cup of the fruit and nut filling evenly on the bottom.
3. Lay three of the partially cooked lasagna noodles on top of the filling.
4. Spread one half of the cream cheese mixture (about 1½ cups) over the noodles.
5. Lay the three remaining partially cooked lasagna noodles on top of the cream cheese mixture.
6. Spread the remaining cream cheese mixture over the noodles. Using a teaspoon, evenly distribute the remaining 2/3 cup of fruit and nut filling over the cream cheese mixture. Do not attempt to spread the fruit filling as you did in the previous step. Just evenly plop little dollops from the teaspoon over the surface.
7. Evenly distribute the topping over the casserole. Place the dish on the middle rack of the oven and bake for about one hour or until dessert has set and puffed up.

## **Pasta with walnuts and sugar**

A few years ago my wife and I were invited to a friend's house for dinner on New Year's Eve. As a first course, a dish similar to the dessert I am about to present was served. With a couple of minor changes, this classic first course dish becomes a wonderful light dessert. It is also easy and fun to make. By eliminating the ice cream or whipped cream, substituting linguini for the bow tie noodles, homemade dry bread crumbs sweetened with two teaspoons of sugar for the crushed biscotti, and virgin olive oil for the unsalted butter, this dish is easily transformed back into a wonderful pasta first course, or a meatless main course.

I make my own biscotti cookies, using one of my mom's recipes, because my kids love them. And if stored in an air

tight container they will keep for up to three weeks. You can buy them fresh if you're lucky enough to have an Italian bakery in your neighborhood or you can buy them prepackaged in many supermarkets.

#### **Main recipe ingredients for 4 to 6 servings:**

6 oz. (dry weight) bow tie or butterfly noodles  
¼ cup walnuts (coarsely chopped)  
½ cup biscotti cookies (crushed to the consistency of bread crumbs)  
freshly grated nutmeg to taste  
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter (melted)  
vanilla ice cream or whipped cream for topping  
poppy seeds for garnish

#### **Method:**

1. Combine the walnuts, crushed biscotti, and nutmeg.
2. Cook the pasta in lightly salted water until just tender. Drain the pasta and return it to the still warm pot.
3. Add the walnut mix and the melted butter to the pasta, and toss gently to blend all ingredients.
4. Serve immediately with a topping of vanilla ice cream or whipped cream on each serving, and sprinkle a few poppy seeds on each plate for garnish.

## **Basic biscotti cookie**

I like these healthful cookies as a dessert because they are light and not too sweet and go good with light wines.

#### **Ingredients for egg wash:**

1 egg  
2 Tbsp. milk

#### **Ingredients for cookies:**

¼ cup unsalted butter  
½ cup sugar  
1 tsp. almond extract  
2 large eggs  
1½ cups all purpose flour  
½ tsp. baking powder  
¼ tsp. Kosher salt  
½ cup whole blanched almonds (lightly toasted, cooled, and chopped fine)

#### **Method:**

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
2. Prepare the egg wash by combining one egg with 2 Tbsp. of milk and stir the mixture with a fork. If you don't use all of this wash, fry whatever is left and make an egg sandwich for lunch. Or as Nanna V would say, "You had better use all of that egg or eat it. You're not going to waste food in my kitchen."

3. To prepare the cookies, use an electric mixer to combine the butter with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of sugar and the almond extract until the mixture is light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, making sure that each one is incorporated before adding another.

4. Sift the flour together with the baking powder and salt.

5. Fold the dry ingredients into the creamed mixture, stir in the nuts, and form the mixture into a round ball. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and place it in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

6. Divide the dough in half. Sprinkle half of the remaining sugar on a work surface and role one piece of the dough through the sugar to form a 12-inch long log, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. Transfer the log to a greased baking

sheet. Repeat the process with the remaining half of the dough.

7. Brush the logs with the egg wash and bake them in the oven for 20 minutes or until they are lightly golden. While the logs are baking you can make your sandwich. I like mine with plenty of hot chilli sauce. Cool the logs for 20 minutes. Do not turn the oven off after removing the logs.

8. Transfer the logs to a cutting board and cut them on a diagonal into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick slices. Lay the slices, cut side down, on a cookie sheet. Return the cookies to the oven and bake them for an additional 20 minutes, or until they are golden brown.

I hope you enjoy these holiday treats. In a future column I will take you on an adventure making fresh pasta—a truly humbling experience the first time you try it.  $\Delta$

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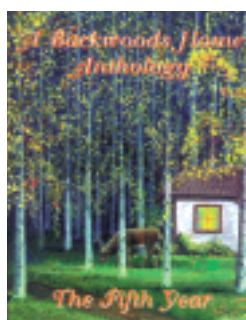
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## How to maintain a dirt road

By Marjorie Burris

It is our job to maintain two and one half miles of dirt road if we want to get into our property. We are completely surrounded by forest service land, and we have an agreement with the forest service to maintain one mile of the road. However, when we reminded the forest service the other mile and a half needed maintenance, too, they answered us in a tone that brooked of no appeal: "We don't like you living in the middle of the forest; you are the only family at the end of that road; it costs us too much to maintain that road for one family; therefore, it is up to you to keep that road open. We call it your road anyway."

So, "our road" it has become. And maintaining it has been an adventure. In fact, working the road led our family into a chain of events we could never have foreseen, not even with the help of a crystal ball gazer. (See Issue 30, "David and the D-4").

In our 25 years of maintaining a dirt road, we have found that, whether you use hand tools or heavy machinery, there are three main objectives: control the flow of water around the road, remove obstacles, and fill in the ruts—usually in that order.

### Control the flow of water

Water in any of its forms—snow, ice, sleet, or rain—is your number one enemy when you maintain a dirt road.

When it is raining, observe your road closely. Water run-off takes the line of least resistance, and you can tell what you need to do to control the flow and where your efforts will produce the most results if you know the path the water naturally takes around or over your road. You can also tell where water will puddle and stand in the dri-



Hubert Burris on a Ford 2000 tractor with blade attached

ving lanes. If water stands in a low spot, you know snow will collect there too. And standing snow will freeze and thaw, making a bog, one of the worst situations in a dirt road.

The first step to drain water away from a road is to slope the road bed slightly from side to side. Some people "crown" a road, that is, they make the center of the road bed higher than the sides letting the water drain from the middle of the road to either side. We have found making a crown hard to do, especially on the steep grades of our mountainous road. In fact, when we agreed with the forest service to maintain our road, they gave us pages and pages of instructions for minimum

standards for a single lane fair weather road, and they recommended the side to side slope drainage. Their recommendations call for an outslope of one-fourth inch per foot of road width. At this rate a thirty foot wide road would be seven and one half inches higher on the high side than on the low side. This doesn't look or feel like much slope when you drive down the road, but it is enough to force the water to run off the side instead of following the road bed down the grade and cutting ruts. (See Figure 1)

If you can slope the road toward the outside edge of a road bank and let the water run off down the side of the hill, your work is done. But there are times when the contour of the land makes it necessary to contain and direct water away from the road by means of a ditch along the side of the road. The bank of the ditch from the edge of the road to the bottom of the ditch needs to slope

at an angle of no less than three inches in a foot. (See Figure 1)

This prevents the water from flowing back onto the road. An adequate ditch needs to be at least one foot wide and one foot deep. In very heavy run off areas, a ditch might need to be much larger. By watching your road during a rain storm, you can estimate just how large a ditch you need in a given area.

At some point, either the water in the ditch, or water rushing down the side of a hill in a wash, will need to be directed across the road. A culvert is ideal here, but culverts are expensive and usually take a lot of work to install. An easier way to direct the water across the road is with what the

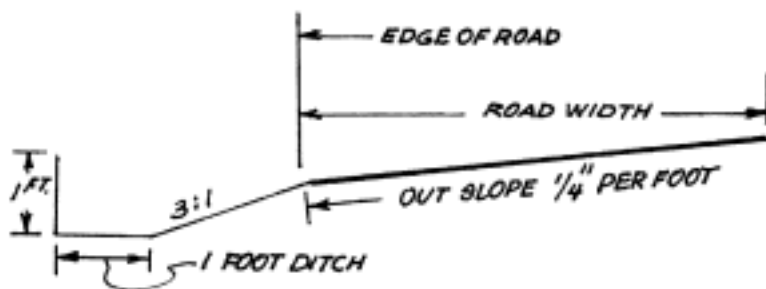


Figure 1. Outslope and ditch

forest service calls a “grade dip.” Our family calls it a speed bump because it feels somewhat like a speed bump in a shopping center parking lot when you drive over it. A grade dip is essentially a shallow ditch dug across the road and lined with rock. The dirt dug out of the ditch is mounded across the road on the downgrade side, making a bump which blocks the water from running down the road and making it flow off the road through the rock-lined ditch.

A good grade dip will be at least 70 feet wide, counting the width of both the ditch and the mound. The ditch part should be about 50 feet wide; the mound should be at least 20 feet wide and have a rise of at least 30 degrees—but 45 degrees is preferable. (See Figure 2) If the uphill grade of the road is steeper than five percent, the grade dip should be widened five feet for each one percent of grade rise. For example, a road having a grade rise of 6 percent should have a grade dip 55 feet wide; a road with a 7 percent grade rise should have a grade dip 60 feet wide. We’ve maintained some grade dips on our road for at least 20 years, and they continue to be very effective.

In low areas where water puddles or snow collects, a simple turnout might be all that is needed to drain the road. A turnout is a shallow notch dug into the outslope edge of the road which encourages the water to flow away.

(See Figure 3) Turnouts sometimes need to be lined with rock so they don’t cause the edge of the road to erode.

## Remove obstacles

It seems like there’s always something in the way on a dirt road in the backwoods. After a big rain, snow, or wind storm, our first question is, “Is our road open?” We are prepared with food and emergency supplies to be stranded for several weeks at a time, and most winter seasons there are at least a few days when we are not able to get out of our homestead. We’ve learned to wait until a deep snow melts enough for us to safely clear the road, and for the road to dry some after a downpour before trying to trav-

el it. We scooted our crawler tractor over the edge of a sharp turn once when we were trying to clear a 30-inch snow from the road in order to get out in a hurry. We slid the Ford tractor over the edge three times and our little Toyota truck has gone over once. We’ve been lucky, as none of our vehicles have turned over, and we have been able to haul them back up with lots of hard work. Figuring that some day our luck might run out, we have finally learned to be prudent and just wait awhile before trying to get out of here. It is a lot more comfortable to stay in the house with a cup of hot cocoa and a good book than it is to risk your neck out in the wet and cold, huffing and puffing with pulleys and cables, trying to undo something that needn’t have happened in the first place.

However, there are times when some things just have to be removed from the road. One ongoing nuisance for us is the huge rocks that keep heaving up in our road bed. The first method of attack is to dig them out. We outline the rock with pick and shovel to see just how big it is, dig down a way all around the rock, then try to slip a chain or cable on it and pull it out with a vehicle. I don’t even want to guess how many rocks we’ve gotten rid of this way.

Then there are the boulders that are just too big to dig out. We’ve used

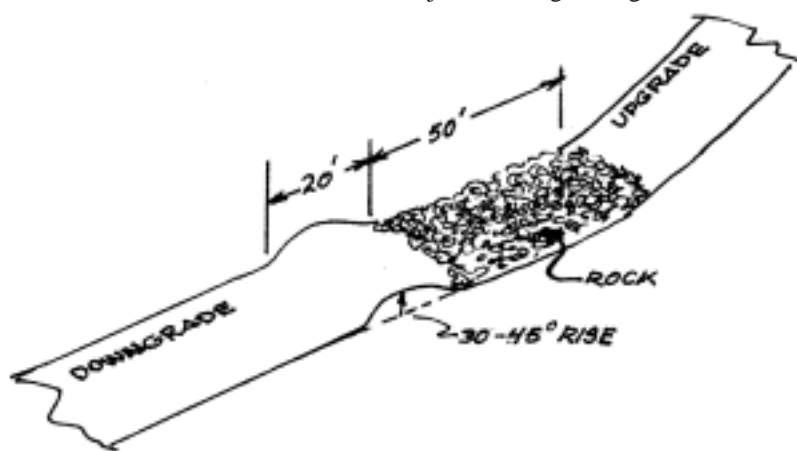


Figure 2. Grade dip



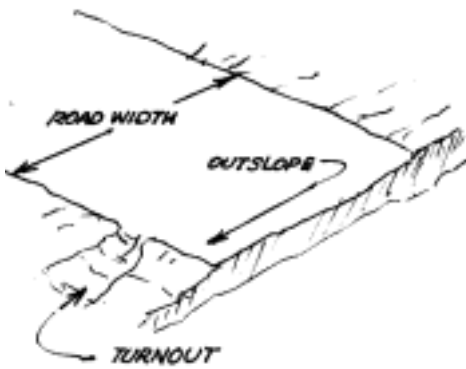


Figure 3. A turnout for draining water off the road

“poor man’s dynamite” many, many times. That’s when you heat a rock as hot as you can get it, then dump cold water on it. The sudden change in temperature causes the rock to split and shatter. If the rock is small enough, we heat it with a blow torch. If it is too large to heat with a torch, we make a trench around the rock, then drag brush and downed trees in from the forest and cover the top of the rock with a bonfire. It takes awhile to heat a rock this way, but it is effective. Of course, we can use this method only when there is no fire danger, and someone has to attend the fire at all times. We carry barrels of water in the back of the truck when we want to douse the fire.

We’ve used real dynamite once and that’s enough for us. It didn’t go off when it was supposed to. That was scary. If we have another job that needs real dynamite, we will hire it done. Placing dynamite is an art that is worthy of its cost. We don’t know much about dynamite, but we do know enough to leave it to a professional.

Branches and trees fallen across the road after a wind storm are always a possibility in our area. For several years we attempted to carry a small chain saw in the truck every time we went down the road. Naturally, when we forgot the saw, or didn’t have room to put it in the truck, that’s when we needed it. For a while we tried car-

rying a two-man cross-cut hand saw, but that was bulky to pack, too, and was hard to use.

Then we read a product review in *Backwoods Home* written by Don Childers about the Short Kutt Pocket Chain Saw (issue 14, page 61). This is a small chain saw blade about 31 inches long with detachable handles, all of which rolls up and fits into a small can not much larger than a shoe polish tin. And the blade is *sharp*. It really works. The Air Force uses it in their Survival School. We immediately ordered the handy little gadget and stuck it in the glove compartment. It has helped us clear a path in our road more than once.

Landslides onto the road after a period of wet weather plague us. Half a century ago when our road was built, there were no regulations about how steep a bank could be when a rural road was cut into the side of a hill. Some of our road is cut straight down into the side of the mountain with the bank above it at an angle of 80 to 85 degrees. Today it is recommended to out an angle of about 55 degrees in common soil, up to 65 degrees in hard pan or soft rock and 70 degrees in hard rock. This helps to prevent landslides.

When the steep bank does slide down, we leave as much of it as possible at the base of the cut instead of shoveling all the dirt away. This is gradually building a more gentle slope from the roadway up to the top of the cut. Several places on the road are too narrow to leave all the debris, however, so we have tried to pull some of the dirt down from the top of the bank to work it back farther away from the road. We weren’t very successful, so decided to let nature keep trimming away at the top and we keep shoveling at the bottom. It is a lot of hard work.

Those branches from overhanging trees and shrubs which slap you in the face as you drive by are annoying in the summer time, but they can be downright dangerous in the winter when they are full of snow and ice and

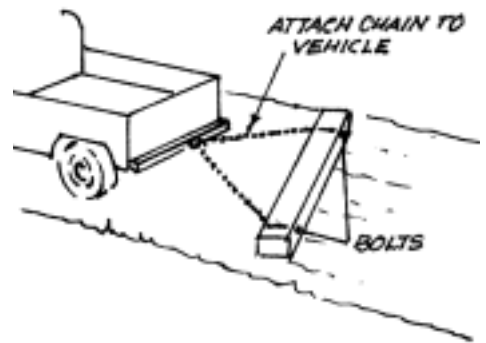


Figure 4. A homemade drag to be used for leveling a road

block your vision. We make a trim-the-branch run down the road in the fall after the leaves have fallen off the deciduous trees and the sap has gone back down the trunks. By standing in the bed of the truck, we can reach most of the offending slappers and saw them off. We stack the branches in the back of the truck, then take them to a gully where we dump them for erosion control. There they can do some good.

## Fill in the ruts

One of the most effective ways to fill in ruts is by dragging something heavy over the road behind a vehicle. A good drag can be made from a log, a railroad tie, or a piece of an iron I-beam. The drag should be as long as your vehicle is wide. Drill a hole in each end of the drag about a foot from the end. Thread one end of a chain in each hole and bolt the chain into place so the drag will not slip up and down the chain. (See Figure 4) Fasten the chain to the vehicle, making one side longer than the other so that the drag follows the vehicle at a slight angle. This helps to maintain the slope in the road which forces water to drain off the road.

We have found that the moisture content of the dirt in the road makes a big difference when using a drag.

Too dry, and the drag just moves a little dust around. Too wet, and the

## *A Backwoods Home Anthology*

mud rolls up under the drag. The road is about right to work when a hand full of dirt makes a crumbly ball, which is the same test that shows when the garden is right to plow. One pass over the road when it has the right amount of moisture in it is better than five passes over the road when it is either too dry or too wet.

Some persistent ruts will need to be filled with rock before they heal. We have found that rocks about the size of two fists make a good base in a rut. After these work into the road during a wet spell, they can be covered with either dirt or smaller rocks. We have lots of rocks so we simply crawl across a field and toss the rock into a trailer, then dump it on the road where needed. Over the years we have eliminated many ruts and boggy places in our road with our rocks. Helps to clear our fields of bothersome rocks too. We often laugh and say we are just moving things around where they need to be to do the most good.

In our opinion, without question, the best piece of equipment to own to maintain a road is a small farm tractor with a blade attachment. This is not a small tractor, sometimes called a garden tractor; it is a farm tractor the size of a Ford 2000. This size tractor has enough power to pull a blade, is comparatively easy to maintain, and will work hard for years, not only on the road but just about everywhere else too.

A four-wheel drive is preferable, but a set of tire chains on the big back wheels makes a two-wheel drive tractor work almost as well in mud, ice, and snow as a four-wheel drive.

One other thing we learned the hard way—to avoid making ruts in a wet road, try to drive on it only when it is frozen. That's usually between four and nine a.m. in our area, if the road is frozen at all. The less ruts made, the less you have to fill.

Even if it is extra work, we think living out in the boonies at the end of a dirt road is very much worth the effort. Δ

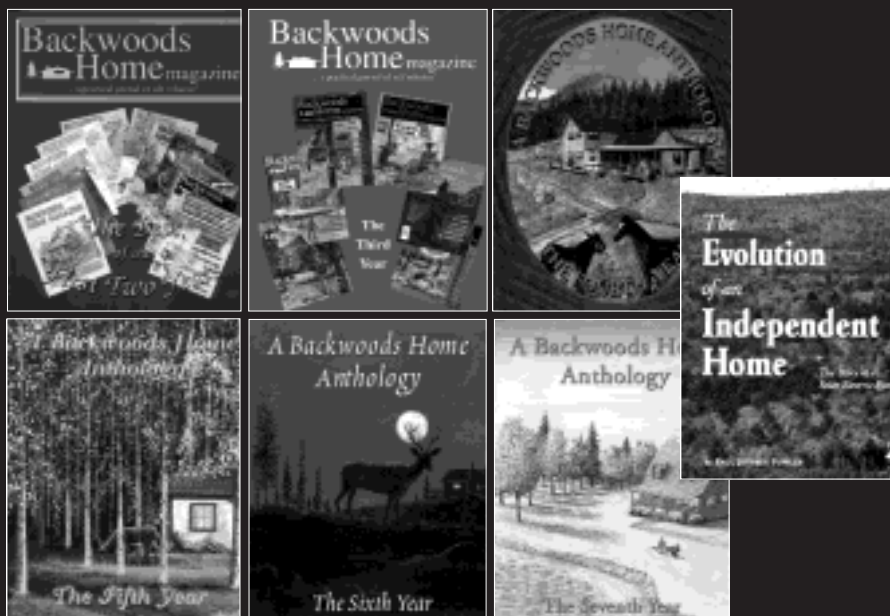
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## Ayoob on firearms

*By Massad Ayoob*

### Old guns for the old homestead

**O**n my most recent week with my family at a lakeside log cabin, the guns in the corner of the master bedroom were blasters from the past: a Winchester Model 1892 lever action rifle in caliber .38-40, and a Winchester Model 97 outside-hammer 12 gauge pump shotgun.

The reason was that during the week I would be competing in the Pony Express shoot, a major tournament in the increasingly popular sport of Cowboy Action Shooting. Though my revolver was a modern replica of an old west six-gun, a single action Ruger Vaquero in .45, I had chosen to use original heirloom antiques in the rifle and shotgun stages. The .38-40 is my wife's, inherited from her grandfather, and the '97 pump gun was inherited from my dad.

The 13 rounds in the '92 rifle's tubular magazine can be spat through the 24" octagonal barrel as fast as the lever can be worked and the trigger pulled. If Sarah Brady had lived a century earlier, she'd have dubbed it an assault rifle. Working the lever as you move between targets, you can shoot it with almost the same rate of accurate fire on multiple targets as a semi-automatic rifle. Built to last, these old Winchesters never seem to wear out from the low pressure handgun type ammunition they fire.

With six rounds in its standard magazine, the Winchester '97 will run as fast as any modern pump gun in the same gauge, faster in one respect since if you hold the trigger back it will fire by itself as you complete the pumping cycle, a design idiosyncrasy anyone new to the gun must be scrupulous to work around with careful handling.

This one was loaded with the same ammo I'd want in a modern 12 gauge for home defense: Federal Express Load #1 buckshot, each round containing 16 .30 caliber lead projectiles.

Other caveats for users of old shotguns: If the barrel or barrels are Damascus or "twist steel," **do not fire them at all**. Damascus steel deteriorates over time. Blowups can occur even with low pressure handloads or original black powder loads, and catastrophic explosions **will** occur if they are fired with modern smokeless powder ammo, especially Magnum shells. Don't fire Magnums even in those Model '97s that have modern chrome-molybdenum ordnance steel barrels; while they won't blow up, the older, softer metal of these venerable guns is likely to cause parts breakage with that kind of pounding. Standard ("express") loads are the maximum that should be used in older shotguns, even if the barrels are modern steel.

The .38-40 Winchester (.38 WCF, or Winchester Center Fire, is what will probably be stamped on the barrel of an original gun chambered for this cartridge) has factory ballistics of 1330 feet per second muzzle velocity and 705 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle when fired from the long barrel of a rifle. For handloaders, Frank Barnes' authoritative textbook "Cartridges of the World" notes that with 22 grains of 2400 powder, the 180-grain projectile can be honked up to 1840 fps and 1360 ft-lb of muzzle energy. **Note that this maximum load should be used only in sturdy rifles in good condition and never in a revolver of the same caliber.**



*Massad Ayoob*

The .44-40 Winchester caliber (.44 WCF) was always more popular. Factory ammo ballistics show a 200 grain bullet running at 1310 feet per second and generating 760 foot-pounds of energy at the rifle's muzzle, while Barnes' maximum recommended 25 grains of 2400 allow the handloader to achieve a greatly increased 1850 fps velocity and a roughly doubled muzzle energy of 1525 ft-lb. **Again, such handloads are maximum and only for modern rifles in good condition, And not for use in any revolver.**

By way of comparison, the same text notes that 1830 feet per second velocity and 1352 ft-lb of energy can be expected from the factory 180 grain .44 Magnum cartridge when fired from a rifle in that caliber. For close range deer hunting, 100 yards and in, these power levels easily suffice. Until the development of the .30/30 a little more than a hundred years ago, the .44/40 carbine was con-



*The author returns from “Cowboy Shoot” with Winchester 1897 shotgun, left, and 1892 carbine. The revolver in his belt is a Ruger Vaquero single action .45.*

sidered the deer rifle in many parts of this country.

These power levels are also ample for personal defense needs of the anti-personnel kind. Even in low velocity revolver rounds, the .38-40's ballistics are analogous to the .40 S&W cartridge developed in 1990 that has become overwhelmingly popular with today's police. In a rifle, it equals or exceeds the ballistics of the HK MP5SF 10mm semiautomatic carbine now issued to FBI agents.

The old rifle and shotgun seemed quite at home in the rustic cabin. Appropriate decor, as it were. They were still capable of performing adequately in gathering game or protecting the family. The single action revolver, too awkward to manipulate compared to a modern gun in a rapid fire situation, was set aside in favor of a modern Colt .45 automatic. Frankly, the manipulation of the outside hammer on the '97 is more prone to human error than the safety catch on more modern “hammerless” shotguns,

and I returned to a Remington semiautomatic shotgun as primary home defense weapon at vacation's end.

Remember that these old guns – rifle, revolver, and shotgun alike – do not have internal firing pin safeties. They can and will go off if dropped should there be a live round in the firing chamber, irrespective of the gun being cocked or the trigger being pulled. Firing chambers of such guns should always be **empty** until the moment to actually fire has arrived.

Old guns bring old values to old homesteads. For many who appreciate the “backwoods home lifestyle,” they are fitting accoutrements to decor and atmosphere, as well as still-functional tools that perform rural firearms needs as well today as they did a century or more ago, when used wisely and carefully. Δ

#### Winter Solstice

*These mornings  
I am up earlier than the sun  
and in the office  
before the sky pinkens,  
warmed by coffee  
instead of light.  
By the time the harbor  
takes on a golden hue,  
I have faxed eight people,  
called nine, finished  
the bills and letters.  
I eat my lunch in my car  
parked beachside to absorb  
the light I seem to need  
while hiding from the wind.  
By quitting time,  
the sky is black  
and I am comforted  
only by flickering television light.  
I pick up the phone twice.  
Hang up. Try again.  
Later I look at the clock,  
(1:00 again) and promise myself  
I'll get to bed earlier tomorrow.*

**Samantha Dunaway  
Nome, AK**



## Give the old chair a lease on life

By Maryann Tempest

There it sat by the back door of a used furniture store, alone and abandoned, as if it was awaiting a journey to the landfill. It was a tired, dumpy-looking chair with faded, threadbare fabric and a ruffle pleat half ripped from the bottom. It was a sickly yellow green, yet there was something about it that drew my attention, and my eyes kept drifting back to it. Finally, I walked over to it for a closer inspection.

The chair's wooden structure was solid, and all the springs were in good condition. It fit my body as if made for me. For a five dollar bill I took that unattractive chair home with me.

Today that chair is one of my favorite pieces of furniture, and I have less than seven dollars invested in it. Literally, for the cost of a spool of thread, you can re-cover your worn-out sofa or chair. The secret is total recycling. Just as our great grandmothers recycled outgrown clothes into quilts, we can use this idea for furniture. But you need to use sturdy material, not the cotton which was used for quilts. Denim is one of the longest-wearing fabrics known to man; it's perfect for giving your older furniture a facelift.

Go through your clothes and pull out all the old jeans that you don't wear anymore. Size doesn't matter, so you can use any you find, whether they belong to you, your spouse, or your children. A few holes or stains won't matter either, because you simply cut around the bad areas. The color does not matter, from completely faded to dark navy—the more variety you have, the better.

To prepare the fabric, make sure all items are laundered. Once you cut them into fabric blocks, you cannot wash them without the edges fraying.

The chair pictured has blocks 4" x 4" in size. However, the size of the block doesn't matter: it can be smaller if you're working with small children's jeans, or larger. Just make sure all the blocks are cut the same and that each one is a perfect square.

With scissors, cut open the blue jean legs at the seams, so the material will lie flat on the table. A rotary cutter is great for cutting the squares, but if you don't have one, use scissors.

A cutting template can be made from anything, such as a plastic lid cut



*The finished chair*

to size or a piece of cardboard. Just be careful that you don't cut the template while cutting out the material, or it will change the size of the next square. A small mirror or piece of glass is firmer than cardboard, and you don't have to worry about cutting it. With a piece of glass, it's also easier to get a perfect square in the knee area of the jeans, which might be a little stretched from wear.

As you cut the patches from each leg, stack them together, and then go on to the next pair of jeans. By keeping the colors and different jeans textures together, it will be easier to lay out the final design. Cut as many patches from each as you can, but don't include seams, metal parts, or any top stitching.

You don't have to be concerned with the grain of the material, just continue cutting pieces in any direction your template will fit.

The amount of material needed will be determined by the size of the chair or sofa you're covering. If you need more material than you have on hand, check out yard sales and thrift stores. I've found men's jeans for ten cents at yard sales, and an entire grocery bag for a quarter at a thrift store.

Once you have enough pieces cut, begin to lay out the pattern. A nine-square patch quilt pattern works great. Alternate colors and textures (light, dark, light) until you have nine blocks together forming a larger square (See Figure 1). The next nine-patch piece should start with the opposite pattern of the first (dark, light, dark), so that when you lay them together, the colors will continue to be alternating.

To attach the squares, you may choose any color of thread which matches your decor. I personally like to use red as a top stitch.

Overlap the edges about a quarter of an inch, and sew the 4" blocks together, using a machine zig-zag stitch. Make sure the raw edge is covered evenly with your machine stitches so it doesn't fray. The nine four-inch blocks combine to form a finished patch approximately 11 inches on a side.

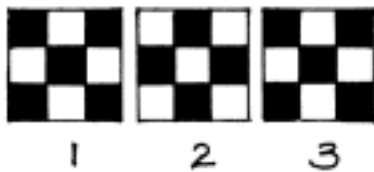
Eventually these 11" x 11" patches will be sewn together, but they are easier to work with in this size while you arrange the pattern.

### Preparing the chair

There are two ways to do this:

1. Pull the old fabric from the chair.
2. Make your denim cover to slide over the old material like a snug slip cover.

If the chair needs repair, or more padding, it's best to remove the old upholstery material so repairs can be completed. To do that, pull the tacks from the material at the bottom of the wooden frame with a tack puller.



*Figure 1 Nine-patch blocks of fabric*

Once the fabric is loose at the bottom, use a seam ripper to open the seams. Remove the piping. Save all old fabric for later to use as a pattern.

Once the chair is stripped, remove the padding, or add new to it if necessary. Quilt batting or old blankets make nice padding if the old padding is flattened and worn out.

Look at the springs and make sure they are all securely fastened. If the rope is sagging, tighten it.

Check the wooden frame. Re-nail or re-glue any loose areas, and make sure it's solid. Elmer's wood glue is excellent for strengthening creaky parts or fixing broken sections.

## Making a slip cover

There are two ways to do this, depending on whether you stripped the old cover off the chair.

If you *did* remove the old cover, use the pieces of it as your pattern: lay out your 11" squares so they combine to form pieces slightly larger than the old pieces. Give yourself a little extra material to work with; it can always be cut off later, which is easier than adding it. Sew the 11" patches together on the machine.

Once all the pattern pieces have been recreated in denim, lay them on the chair and pin the inside back to the outside back. Pin the inside arms to the outside arms, the bottom lip to the deck, and so on, but keep each section separate (back, arms, etc.) for easy removal and additional sewing. Then use the following directions, starting at step 3.

If you *didn't* remove the old cover, start with steps 1 and 2 as follows:

1. Cut off any piping, pleated ruffle, or other decorative trim which would show as a ridge under the denim. (It's not necessary to use a seam ripper.)

2. Lay your 11" patches side by side on the inside chair back, overlapping the edges  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. Arrange them in an attractive design, then pin them together. Do the same to the outside back. (Don't pin them too tightly, because this has to slip off the chair for the patches to be sewn together (See Figure 2.)

Do the same thing with the inside arms and outside arms, the seat bottom and the deck, but do not pin the arms to the back or the bottom of the chair: keep each section separate (back, arms, etc.) for easy removal, so you can sew them on the machine.

3. The top stitching makes it easy for each panel to be adjusted: you do not have seams to turn wrong side out, simply sew the zig-zag stitch wherever your pins are located and trim off the excess overlap.

Once all sections are custom-fitted with pins, slip them off the chair. Machine sew each section, using your pins as a sewing guide.

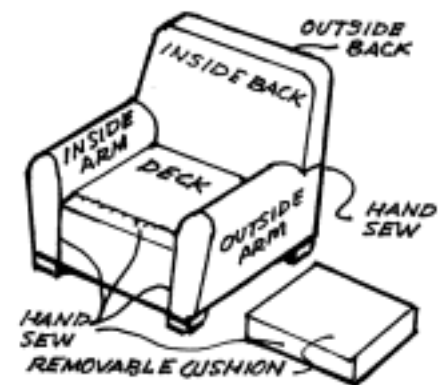
4. If the chair or sofa has cushions, cover the top and bottom of each one with the 11" patches, then sew them together, leaving an opening large enough for the pillow to slide inside.

If you want, attach a zipper so the slip cover can be removed for cleaning. However, long zippers are very expensive, and if the pillow does not have a zipper, I hand sew the opening closed using a whip stitch. If the cushion covering needs to be washed, a seam ripper opens it in seconds.

5. Depending on the style of the chair, you might be able to sew all the sections together on the machine, or you may have to hand stitch the different sections together right on the chair. If you have made the cover completely form-fitting, it's easier to hand sew the arm sections to the back and bottom sections using a whip stitch. (See Figure 1).

6. The final step is to nail the bottom of your denim covering to the wooden frame. Fold the bottom edge of the denim so you're nailing through two layers. Use upholstery tacks. Pull the fabric snug—not tight. The weight of a person's body will cause the fabric to rip if it is too tightly tacked. Remember, if you make it too loose, you can tighten it later by re-tacking the bottom, but if it rips it's harder to fix.

Denim has the ability to blend with almost any decor and any color. It can look Southwestern if combined with earth tones and Indian accessories. Team it with bright flowers and it becomes tropical with an island flavor. Add ocean blues and sea shells, and it has a nautical look. Combine it with lace and dusty gray-blue, and denim blends nicely with country accents.



*Figure 2*

In my family room, I teamed it with strong primary colors—red, navy, and bright yellow. My seven-dollar chair never fails to bring compliments. The best part of this recycling idea is the long-wearing life of denim. It's been around for a hundred years and will probably be here for another hundred.

Denim wears like iron, but if one little square wears out or happens to get stained, it can be fixed easily. You simply cut out the same size patch as you used in the beginning and sew it on top of the stained one, using the same color top stitching. It's almost invisible. As long as manufacturers make blue jeans, you'll have a ready source of fabric awaiting recycling. Δ

# Use this system to make “quickie quilts” for the whole family . . . in time for Christmas!

By Tanya Kelley

Nothing beats a fluffy quilt for keeping you toasty warm on cold winter nights. In our family, each of the six kids agreed, and of course they all thought they should be first in line for a new quilt for Christmas. To eliminate any hurt feelings, I decided that they would *each* get a new quilt for Christmas.

Under any circumstances, making six quilts is no small task. Making them all three weeks before Christmas is . . . entirely possible. *If* you use my quickie quilt plan.

The directions below are for a twin-size quilt. However, the design is easily adaptable to different size quilts simply by adding more rows of borders on the sides.

## Materials

For a twin-size quilt you will need:

- Fabric scraps (preferably all of one type such as all men's plaids, all red prints, all small floral prints, all leftovers from a child's favorite clothes)
- Two and a quarter yards of a contrasting fabric (Indicated by shading in the diagrams. Use a solid color or a distinctly different pattern. Depending on the print, you may need more fabric to match the pattern of the print.)
- Two skeins of knitting yarn (matching or contrasting with the colors in the fabrics)
- One quilt bat, same size as you want the finished quilt (You can use two for an extra fluffy quilt.)
- One flat sheet, same size as you want the finished quilt
- Large crewel needles (sharp point)
- Scissors
- Pliers
- Sewing machine

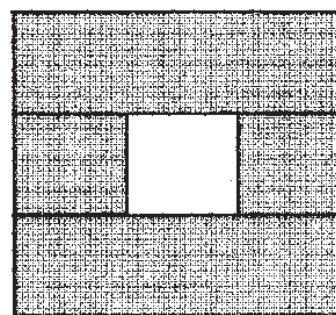
## Directions

1. Notch and tear fabric scraps into  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " squares. You will need 67 squares, but make a few extra to avoid putting the same pattern fabrics next to each other. Cut or tear strips of the contrasting fabric into  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " strips and two  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " squares. There may be places where you will need to sew pieces of the strips together to have pieces long enough to go the length of a border.

2. Sew the two contrasting fabric squares on either side of a scrap square with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. This scrap square



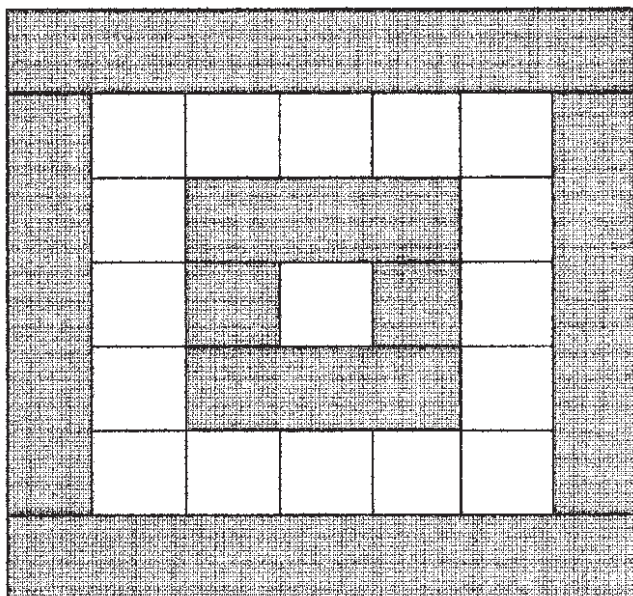
will be the very center of the quilt, so you might want to pick a more interesting or special fabric. Then sew the contrasting fabric strips on top and bottom of the three-square strip. It will look like this:



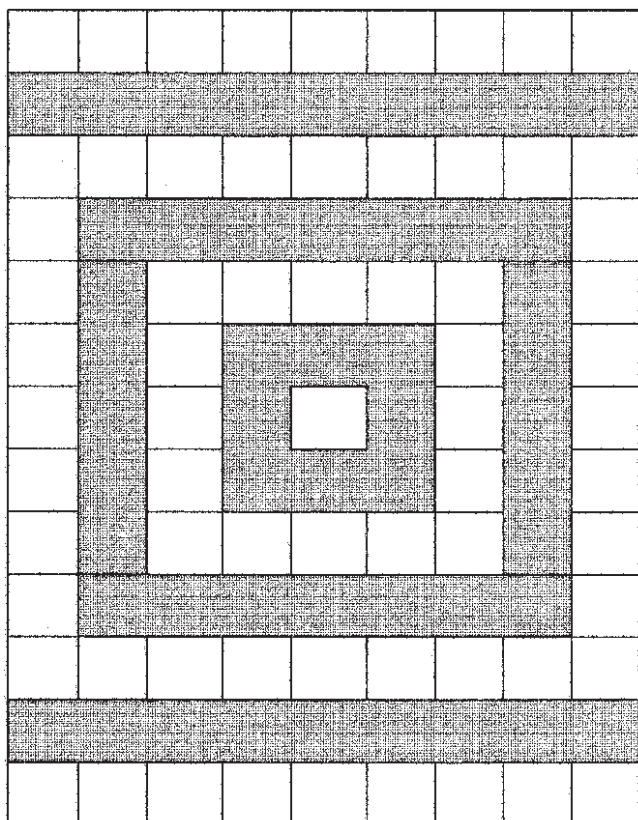
3. Sew two strips of three scrap squares. Sew them to each side of the block. Then sew two strips of five scrap squares. Sew one strip to the top of the block and one to the bottom to form a border around the block. Then sew another border on the block using the contrasting strips. Sew them first to the sides and cut off the excess to keep the block square.



Then sew strips on the top and bottom of the block. It will look like this:



4. Repeat by sewing a border of squares on all four sides, and then a border of the contrasting fabric on only the top and bottom of the quilt top. Then add another top and bottom border of the scrap squares. Completely pieced, the top will look like this:



5. Iron the quilt top, squashing the seams as they fall. On a large, clean surface (such as the floor), spread out the flat sheet. Then spread out the quilt bat on the sheet, taking care that there are no folds and that the bat covers the sheet and is exactly even with the top and one side. Do not trim off any excess on the other sides. Repeat with the quilt top.

6. Depending on your experience and dexterity, you might be able to tie the quilt without fastening it together. However, if you have any fears that the fabrics and the bat will shift and cause bubbles from the unevenness of the layers, take precautions using one of these methods:

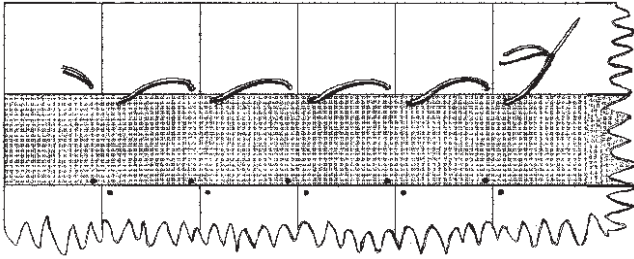
(a) You can pin or baste the layers together using a giant (and messy) running stitch. I would recommend fastening through all the layers at least every two or three squares. This might sound time consuming, but it can be worth it.

(b) Another option is to pin the quilt to your carpet. The disadvantages of this are that you will have a harder time reaching under the quilt to pull your needle through. You also have to be careful to not catch the needle in the carpet and sew the quilt to the floor.

(c) Still another, and probably the best option is to put your quilt on a quilt frame. Since I personally hate working with quilt frames, I usually baste the quilt and I have never had any problems.

7. Thread your needle with two different color strands of yarn, slightly less than twice the distance you can reach with your arm. Do not knot. Only two strands of the yarn will be used to tie, so the yarn should pull through the needle holes as you go, to give you a longer distance you can sew before re-threading. (That is, one end of each strand stays back at the first hole, while the other end pulls through each hole with the needle.)

Begin stitching at the top square of the side that has all the layers aligned. Put the needle in the lower-right corner of the square, where it meets the second block in the row and the strip below it. Push the needle through all the layers and out the back. Bring the needle back up through the layers, angling the stitch so that the finished knot will be about an inch wide, and will cover the spot where the three fabrics meet. Pull the yarn through, leaving a three-inch tail. Don't cut the yarn (think of it as a very long, loose whip stitch), but go on to the next square and repeat all the way across the top. Always go in and out the same corners, so each stitch is at the same angle. Depending on the fabrics and yarns, you may or may not be able to complete the in and out of the stitch in one motion. Use pliers if necessary to pull the needle through. When you get to the end of the row, come back the other way in the same fashion. (If you want your ties closer together, you can make them in the centers of the squares, as well as the corners.)



It will look like this:

Continue for the rest of the quilt, rolling the quilt as needed to move forward. When you roll the quilt, make sure it is rolling evenly and that the edges are staying even. Always smooth any bubbles away from the even side to keep the edges even. When the entire quilt is stitched, clip between

each knot and tie together in a square knot. Trim yarn if desired.

8. Trim the edges evenly, matching all layers to the top. There are several different ways to edge your quilt. You can bind it with a contrasting or matching fabric, but I prefer faster methods. I have turned both edges inside and blind stitched them together or even machine stitched them together. The second option is sturdier and faster, but a little trickier. I have also turned the edges to the back and folded them under and sewn them down by hand or machine. This makes a neat little roll on the edge, but it is harder to sew. The last method I have used is to turn the edge under to the back and blanket stitch around the quilt with the same yarn I used to tie. If you decide to do this, you should cut the corners of the quilt in a slight curve. All of the above methods work well and each gives a different appearance. Δ

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## For float-hunting, you'll want to make a Native American style canoe paddle

By Rev. J.D. Hooker

Many people, not only here in the US, but worldwide, enjoy the sport of canoeing, whether they simply paddle around the lake or are into serious whitewater running. It seems the sport is still growing too.

I couldn't even start to count all of the different styles, sizes, or types of canoes presently being manufactured. Yet it seems as if only two types of canoe *paddles* are offered today. There's the regular straight style paddle, which seems to have become pretty well standardized for at least a couple of generations. Then there's a newer sort of paddle that bends where the handle shaft meets the blade. That type has been capturing its own following in recent years. For most canoeing purposes these two mainstream paddle styles actually are close to ideal.

But you see, there is, and always has been, a small but dedicated minority of us who canoe with a somewhat more serious intent. My own hand-laminated fiberglass canoe has seen roughly 20 years of hard use, and it's been more of a working tool than a recreational craft. I've used it not only for fishing and fur trapping, but for float-hunting everything from squirrels and waterfowl to whitetail deer. Float-hunting from a canoe has long been a proven and reliable game collecting technique, which a substantial number of serious hunters still employ.

Every little thing counts in this sort of hunting, however, and many things can spook wary game, such as light reflecting off the brass of a shotgun shell or a polished gun barrel, an ill-timed quick movement, or the sound of water droplets running off

your paddle. So every tiny edge you can get greatly improves your success rate.

Therefore, like other serious hunters, I've adopted a somewhat different paddle type for my own use. Actually it is quite similar to the straight handled style of paddle you'll normally find offered for sale. The major differences are that the blade is just slightly longer and wider than standard, and it tapers to a sharp point. This pointed taper allows water to run off the blade in near absolute silence.

This isn't a new design. Many serious meat hunters have preferred this paddle design for obvious reasons, including the Tlingit, Kwakiutl, Haida, and most other Northwest Coast Indians; many Florida Seminoles; Amazon River native hunter-fishermen; as well as several generations of poachers, market gunners, and others. To the best of my knowledge, however, it has never been offered on a regular, ongoing commercial basis.

Originally designed by Native American hunters, and fashioned with the simplest of hand tools, this style of paddle is very simple and straightforward to produce when using today's power tools.

The easiest method for making one of these paddles, and probably the most common, is simply to cut it from a single piece of 1x8 hardwood. I prefer oak—red or white, pin or black. Any oak makes a nearly indestructible paddle. Most other hunters seem to prefer a somewhat lighter weight hardwood though, like ash or hard maple. To each his own, but select very sound, straight-grained lumber, no matter what species you choose.

I prefer the paddle that's fashioned from a single piece of wood. Its simplicity and utility offer a unique quali-

ty which I find attractive. As I also prefer to finish paddles intended for actual work with nothing more than a

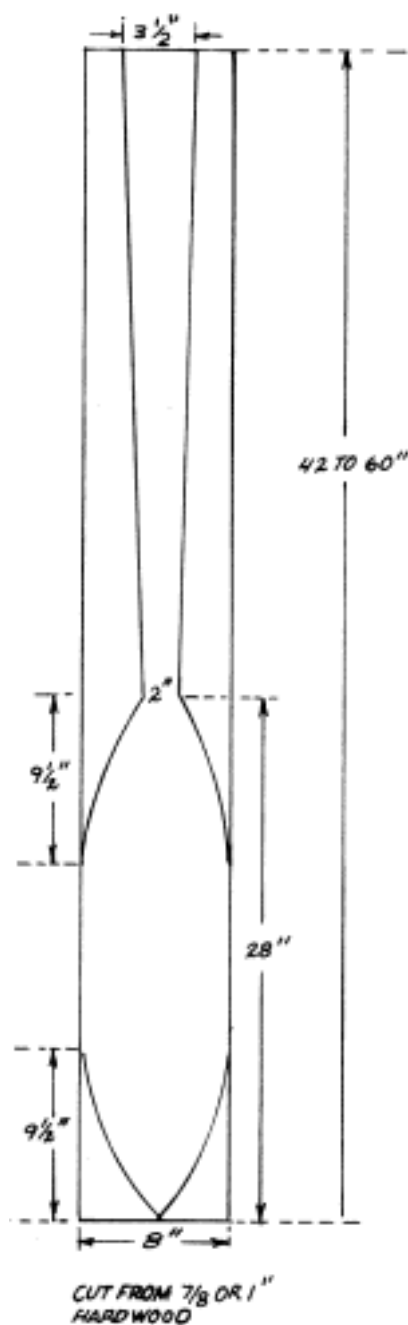


Figure 1. Pattern for one-piece paddle



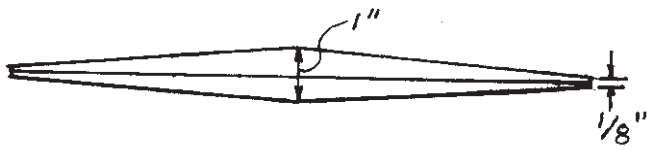


Figure 2. Feathered blade

couple coats of flat paint, this is the style I usually make for my own use.

Paddles of this design can also be built up from different pieces of wood: one for the blade, another for the handle shaft, and a third to form a T- or Y-type handle at the top. Using contrasting woods and a clear finish can make this into a terrific looking project which allow your woodworking skills to be displayed in a really nice manner.

My own favorite multi-section paddle has a bright yellow mulberry blade, nearly white ash handle shaft, and a black walnut insert forming the Y handle. Put together with red oak pegs and black walnut wedges, it looks so great that I just haven't been able to bring myself to use it.

After producing enough of these paddles for my own use, and several more for friends and family members, I found there is a fair market for this type of paddle among other sportsmen (and sportswomen) in our area.

My wife has a somewhat artistic bent and is of Cherokee descent as well, so it wasn't long before she decided to decorate a few paddles with Native American type motifs. These shortly developed into a secondary market, attracting buyers who collect Indian style art, Americana, and just unusual stuff.

So, whether you are interested in just fashioning a couple of paddles for your own use, or considering adding a simple but fairly profitable item to your woodshop's production, you should find this project to your liking.

If you're going to tackle the one-piece type paddle, simply use a band-saw, jigsaw, or sabre-saw to cut out the outline as shown in Figure 1. After that, I use a router with a 1/2-inch round-over bit to shape the edges of

the handle and shaft, then a belt sander with 40-grit paper to feather the blade from full thickness at the center to 1/8 inch or

3/16 inch at the edges (Figure 2). After that I go over the entire paddle, using progressively finer paper in an orbital

type finish sander. I do a final hand sanding using 180-grit paper.

As I've already mentioned, I like to use weather-proof flat paint as a finish. If you simply can't stand to cover up the wood's grain, any good clear, satin exterior grade finish would serve with equal durability.

For the paddle that's built up from separate parts, the parts are cut out as shown in Figure 3. I use dowels and

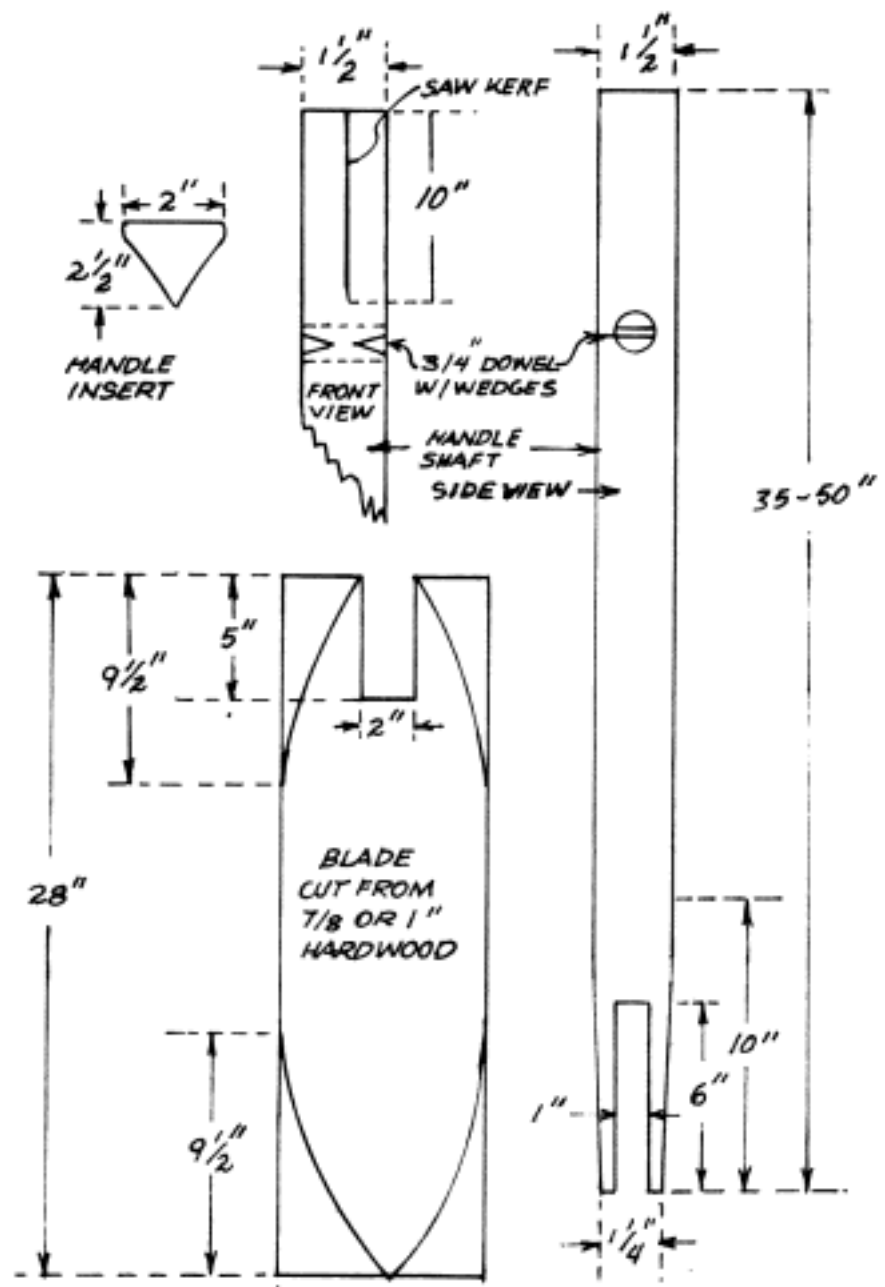


Figure 3. Built up paddle pattern

wedges and epoxy for assembling the pieces to ensure maximum strength in the joints. You may have some other favorite joinery method, but if you intend actually using the paddle, make certain your technique can stand up to plenty of abuse.

Usually I make the handle shaft from a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  x  $1\frac{1}{2}$  piece of hardwood, and I use a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch round over bit *after* the paddle is assembled. This produces a more unique look where the shaft overlaps the blade. Using a round piece of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick stock

works just as well, and it gives a slightly different look. Try whichever method you think you'd prefer, or try both and see which you like better.

Used by generations of this hemisphere's finest hunters, this type of Native American style paddle is actually a part of our heritage. Woodworking is an equally important aspect of our historical roots as well. So in a way, fashioning this type of paddle represents an intersection of two very important traditions—kind of a wooden cultural celebration. And

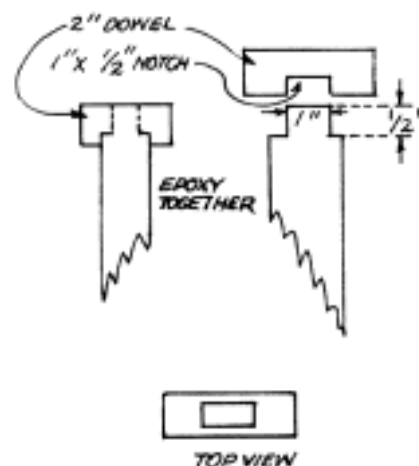
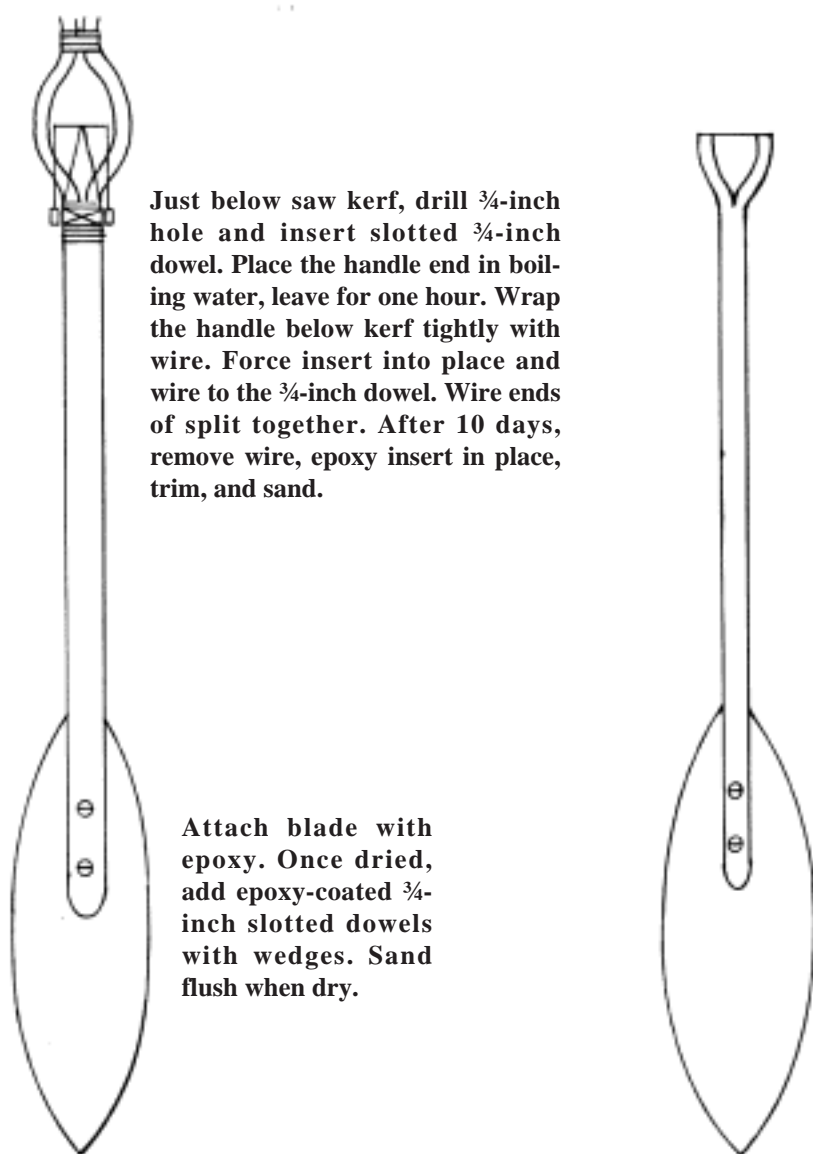


Figure 5. An alternate handle

it results in an end product that is just as eminently suited to its purpose today as when it was originally designed, somewhere in the mists of prehistory. Δ



Just below saw kerf, drill  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch hole and insert slotted  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch dowel. Place the handle end in boiling water, leave for one hour. Wrap the handle below kerf tightly with wire. Force insert into place and wire to the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch dowel. Wire ends of split together. After 10 days, remove wire, epoxy insert in place, trim, and sand.

Attach blade with epoxy. Once dried, add epoxy-coated  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch slotted dowels with wedges. Sand flush when dry.

Figure 4. Attaching the handle and the blade to the shaft



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# Make a gold or silver wire cross in 10 easy steps

By Robert Kramer

You can readily make a wire cross that can be worn as either an earring or a necklace in just a few steps.

## Materials needed

1. Copper, silver, or gold wire
2. Small wire snippers or old finger/toenail clippers
3. Small needlenose pliers
4. Small file or old metal fingernail file
5. Earring hoop or sting/chain for necklace

## Instructions

1. Take a piece of wire approximately 3 inches long and bend it in the middle with one end overlapping the other (Figure 1).

2. Twist the wire four or five times (Figure 2).

3. Bend right-hand side wire over so that it meets the base of the middle of the first twist and twist four or five times (Figure 3).

4. Turn the cross so that the left side is on the right and repeat step number 3 (Figure 4).

5. Gather the two side wires and twist eight to ten times (Figure 5).

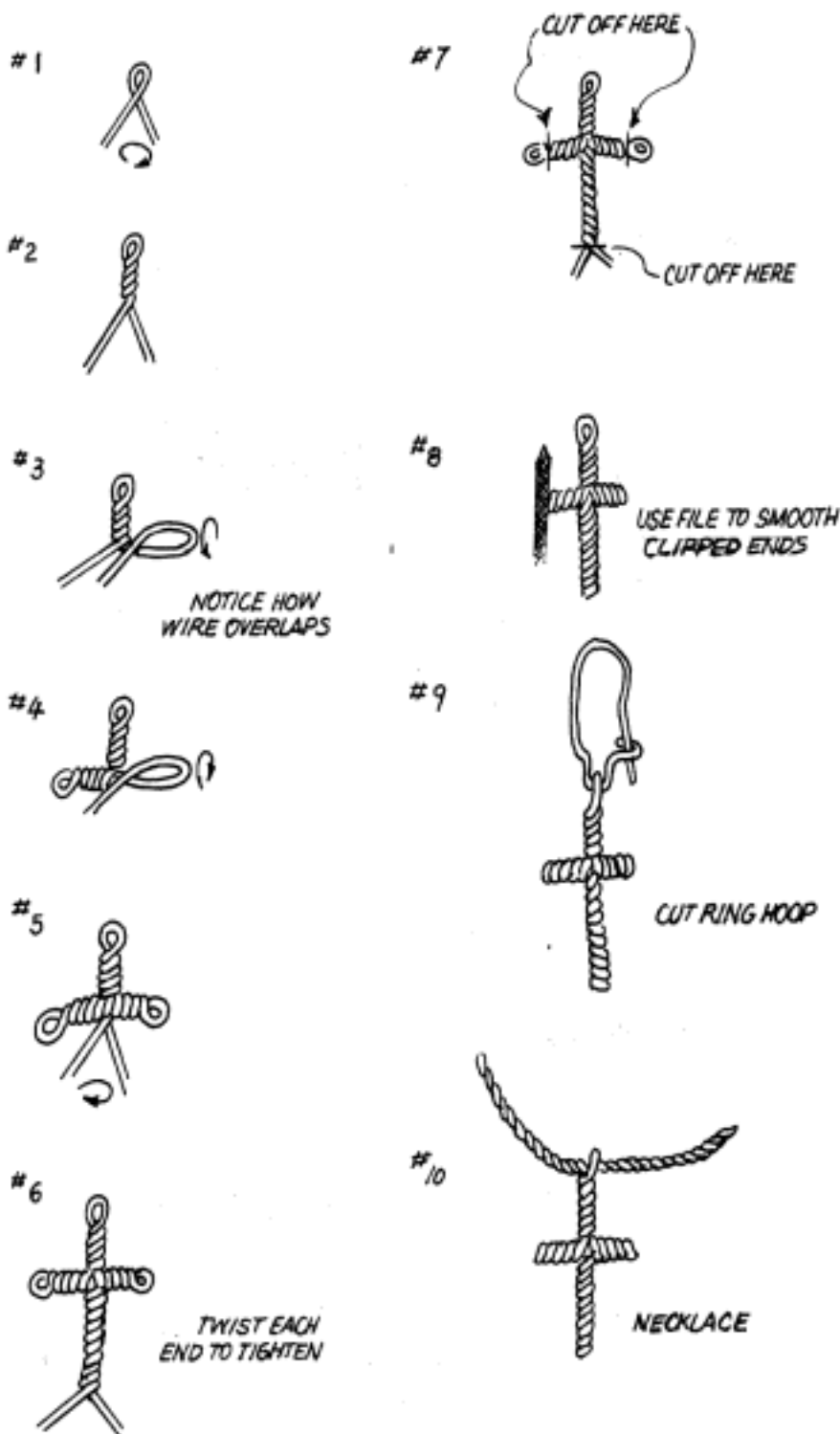
6. Tighten up the cross by twisting each end until the cross is tight and uniform looking (Figure 6).

7. Cut off the sides and bottom of the cross at the ends (Figure 7).

8. Use a metal nail file to smooth the cut ends so that it will not snag something or have a sharp, scratchy end (Figure 8).

9a. Make a half twist of the loop that is left in the top and put it on an earring hoop (Figure 9). Or,

9b. Place a string or necklace chain through the hoop for a necklace (Figure 10). Δ





## Commonsense preparedness just makes sense

*By Jackie Clay*

What if that snowstorm turned to a blizzard or an ice storm lasted for days, knocking out the power and phone lines? Would you be prepared? Or what if you lost your job, or an illness or injury prevented you from working for a lengthy time? Could you survive? Or what if you had a severe economic depression? Could you and your family cope?

Commonsense preparedness is not a new concept based on the fear of an Armageddon. It is an old idea that goes back to biblical times when Joseph advised the pharaoh to store food for the coming famine. In modern times Mormons, Mennonites, Amish, and even our grandparents lead or have led lives based on being prepared for unexpected hard times.

But though once art of most folks' everyday lives, commonsense preparedness today has fallen by the wayside, and vast numbers of people are totally unprepared for even the smallest emergency.

There is much you can do to remedy this, and it starts with taking stock of just what makes your household tick. Here is how my family has prepared for the unexpected:

### Water storage

A human can live much longer without food than without water, so having adequate water available is at the top

of any list. When calculating your family's water needs, include water for sanitation, that is, for flushing the toilet as well as washing one's self and cooking utensils. The toilet doesn't *have* to be flushed after every use, and a person doesn't *need* a 15 minute shower twice a day, but some water is necessary.



A supply of potable water is a must. We keep 30 gallons of drinking water stored in 5-gallon jugs in our house at all times. We keep the same amount stored in old, well-washed and bleach-rinsed plastic milk jugs to use (sparingly) as wash water. Besides this, we are fortunate to have two 1,000-gallon stock tanks in the pasture. They are kept full and are reasonably clean—clean enough for flushing the toilet or washing. We also have two small springs and a good creek which runs year-round, half a mile from the house.

It is a good idea to have a good water filter on hand which reliably filters contaminants out of the water, including giardia, a parasitic protozoa

which causes severe diarrhea and inhabits even the clearest of mountain streams. In some emergency situations, normal community water may become contaminated and require filtration to be safe to drink. Should you not have a filter, which unfortunately are usually pretty costly, boiling the water for fifteen minutes provides safe

drinking water under less than desirable situations. Another option is using water purification tablets, which make the water safe but yucky tasting.

Be sure to have enough water on hand to take care of livestock and pets, as well as your family. And include a jug of water in your auto emergency kit, especially in the summer. Drinking

water is a must, but water enough to fill a hot radiator is a close second.

### Food

Everyone immediately thinks of food when making up a preparedness list, with MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), the military's replacement to the old C Rations, high in popularity. But few folks really think their way through a preparedness pantry, for it is best not to prepare for a week-long "emergency," but rather have enough stored food on hand to last the entire family for two years. **Two years?** Yes. One never knows what the future will bring, even when you raise most of your own food. For this reason we always can all of our large garden's

produce, even if it seems extravagant, for who knows if next year's crop will be hailed out and the year after that killed by drought or insects. And who knows if someone will lose a job or health, or have a relative or friend in need move in with them, creating a real need for extra food.

We keep wheat, stored as whole grain because it keeps longer, and we grind it with our hand mill. We also keep whole corn, dry milk, margarine powder, powdered eggs, flours, corn meal, honey, and yeast. Also a huge variety of home-canned foods which, if processed right and kept reasonably cool and dry, last nearly forever. Sure, you may lose some nutrients over time, but by using fresh vegetables and fruits to start out, you can counterbalance any loss easily and have a full stomach. These home-canned foods are more than just tomatoes, beans, and peaches. I can year-round making my own chili, taco filling, beef stew, smoked fish, turkey noodle soup, etc.—all of which are easy-to-heat taste treats.

We also dry a lot of our produce and fruit, sealing them in canning jars to preserve freshness. I dry berries, cherries, peaches, apples, pumpkin, squash, onions, peas, carrot chips, banana chips, fresh and cooked corn, peppers, mushrooms, and more, all of which are easily and quickly rehydrated and ready to use.

I always make sure we have plenty of flour, baking powder, sugar, salt, spices, and shortening as well—all bought when sales are on.

Some preparedness foods are bought by mail and shipped to us sealed in #10 cans (about 1 gallon) or white plastic buckets. But these can be pricey.

Many items, such as our dry beans, flours, sugar, baking powder, etc. we store in popcorn tins, glass gallon-jars, etc., all tightly sealed against dampness and insects. Our wheat and whole corn is freezer treated for three days in sealed containers, then dumped into 30-gallon food-grade garbage cans

with tight-fitting lids. A few bay leaves thrown in on top further protects the grain from weevils.

Most foods, such as spices (bought economically at local health food stores by the pound) and baking powder keep very well and long-term in jars that have tight-fitting lids. If the food comes from the grocery store in sealed containers, we leave them in



*Every home should have an outhouse for emergency use.*

those containers as they will keep much longer than the “freshness date” stamped on the box or bag.

While all this food does keep very well in a dry, cool pantry, away from the light, it is important to keep track of the dates you put it up or purchased it, and to keep rotating your stock through everyday use so that the oldest food is eaten and replaced with fresh food. This way you will never lose any of your stored food.

But what about a freezer full of great food? A freezer may be handy, but it is **not** an option for emergency food storage. First of all, frozen food is only good frozen. If the power goes off, and you don't have a backup electrical system such as a generator or a

photovoltaic system to keep your freezer going during the entire power outage, your stored food will thaw. I know; I lost a third of my very large freezer full of meat, poultry, and vegetables during a week-long power outage—and I would have lost more if I hadn't been able to can the rest. I haven't relied on a freezer, other than Mother Nature's on a temporary basis, since then.

Another reason not to depend on a freezer is that there are instances where your family may have to quickly evacuate your home, and it's very nice to be able to load up the truck with a good load of your pantry food, even if you are only going to spend two weeks at your mother's until the emergency passes.

We always keep some emergency food in our truck, behind the seat. We can't afford MREs, but there's jerky, candy bars, dried fruit, crackers, a few tins of Spam, and dried soup. We also keep a box in the shell that contain a small propane stove, frying pan, pot, sleeping bags, etc. Recently, our fuel pump went out on our truck while we were on the freeway, leaving us stranded for seven hours, and we got hungry. Not a big emergency, but life is full of little emergencies.

## **First aid/medication**

A complete first aid kit containing any prescription medicine needed by family members is a must in any home. I laugh at many first aid kits that consist of just a few bandaids and a tube of ointment. Ours is a field kit contained in a heavy duty shooter's box—similar to a fishing tackle box, but heavier, and with a deep lower section. Both my husband Bob, a certified nurse's assistant, and I, a veterinary field technician, have extensive medical experience so our kit is beefed up. But every kit should include at least the following: a Red Cross first aid manual, heavy and small scissors; tweezers, several 20-gauge hypodermic needles (nothing



removes slivers and thorns better), large fingernail clippers, at least two rolls of 1-inch and 3-inch sterile gauze, a box of sterile 3-inch gauze pads, sterile cotton, a bottle of sterile saline solution, a large tube of topical ointment containing antibiotics or sulfa and a topical anesthetic, a jar of A & D ointment, eye drops such as Visine, a roll of elastic bandage about 3 to 4 inches wide, two small towels, an enamel pan for water (ours fits snugly in the bottom of the case taking up no extra room), a denture repair kit, a temporary filling kit, a box of assorted band-aids and butterfly sutures, a roll of surgical adhesive tape, Calamine lotion, bottle of aspirin (and Tylenol for children), antihistamines, cough medicine, cough drops, antibiotics (if your doctor will write a prescription for your emergency kit for you), and any other medicines you or your family may need unexpectedly. A bar of plain soap and antiseptics, such as alcohol or Betadine, are also necessary. I would also recommend an antifungal, as used for jock itch or athlete's foot, and a treatment for vaginal yeast infection. Such problems often occur making a little emergency a big emergency in terms of comfort.

Our kit also includes an intravenous kit, IV electrolytes, dextrose solution, suturing material and needles, forceps, scalpels and blades, injectable local anesthetic, epinephrine, antibiotics, splinting material, a blood pressure cuff, stethoscope, etc., all used of course in an emergency where no medical help would be available.

Your kit should always be readily available and it should also have your doctor's phone number and emergency numbers, such as the hospital, poison control, police, fire, etc., written in permanent marker under the top. We also keep a mini-kit under the seat of the pickup. It's a scaled down version of the larger kit but it is also quite comprehensive.

No first aid kit is worth a darn, though, unless a person has some medical knowledge. A basic Red



*Digging out for the foundation of our new pantry addition to allow for two years of food storage*

Cross first aid course including CPR training is necessary, as is a little additional study from books found at your library. A few minutes spent could save a family members' life.

## **Warmth, cooking, light**

Unfortunately, most of our severe weather and most of our family emergencies, such as job loss, occur during the winter when the weather is cold and blustery and the daylight hours are short and depressing. It is very important to consider what would happen if the power was off in your house. Most modern homes heat with gas furnaces, but you get no heat unless the **electric** blower moves the heat to the rooms. So, we'll heat with our kitchen stove, folks say. Also fine, unless your stove is electric or a "modern" gas stove with electric ignition.

Then, there are folks with an all electric home. Lots of luck if the power goes out for any length of time, especially during a blizzard or severe ice storm. Many of *BHM's* readers are fortunate enough to have a photovolta-

ic system and backup generator, but even these systems can go down.

Our family lived without electricity for five years in the mountains of southwestern Montana and we enjoyed our life staying warm and cozy without power using wood stoves both to cook on and to heat the house. Now we live on the high prairie of northern New Mexico where winter northers can blow snow at 40 mph. We still cook with a wood kitchen range, which also helps heat the house, but we have wall propane furnaces, too, the kind without electric blowers.

No home should be without a backup heating system which requires no electricity. There are alternatives to wood should wood heat be unavailable. Today, there are efficient small propane heaters which take up little space and will heat a room or two at small cost during a power failure. Be sure the heater is installed properly and used safely when needed. There are also kerosene room heaters which work well when used with caution. Be sure adequate fuel is safely stored outdoors, be it propane or kerosene.



In many climates, a heater below your home's water lines is necessary to prevent frozen and bursting pipes. And if your water comes from a well, be sure there is a heater safely burning in your well house or, when the electricity comes back on, your water may be frozen and presenting you with a real problem. We have a small, ventless, propane heater in our well house which we light during severe and windy winter weather. It keeps things unfrozen until the weather moderates and does so without electricity and at very little cost.

**Never use an unvented heater of any kind, unless it is approved for home use, unvented, as your family may end up dead due to asphyxiation.**

**Also, in your truck or auto, never depend on the motor and heater to keep you warm.** We keep a Coleman lantern and fuel in a box in the back of the truck which can be used for heat as well as light during an emergency.



*Bob's broken leg from a snowmobile wreck—handled well at home because there was no doctor available*

Always keep a downwind window cracked open, to prevent asphyxiation.

In addition, we keep heavy sleeping bags in a plastic box under the truck's shell along with a change of winter clothes which includes old, but warm, winter boots. Generally, staying with the vehicle is the best course of action during an emergency as a person is protected from the weather and easier to find than if stumbling about in a blizzard. But, if you have to walk, it is best to do so in warm winter clothes, with a sleeping bag wrapped around you, than in mall clothes and tennis shoes.

Back home again, cooking and lighting should also be considered. If your backup heat is wood, you can cook meals on most wood heaters. But many propane heaters do not facilitate cooking. A simple solution is a small, countertop propane stove. A two-burner stove with flexible hose, connected to a 30-pound propane "pup" or portable tank, works great. We also carry a mini backpacking propane stove in our emergency box in the back of the truck. It takes up only 24 square inches, weighs a few ounces, and quickly connects to a disposable propane cartridge, giving instant heat. We once cooked supper on it, just out of Yellowstone park, in the middle of the highway, while waiting for the park service to clear a mud slide off the road. Another option is a Coleman camp stove which fits right on the counter and provides two burners of cooking power instantly.

Of course, when the power is gone, so are the lights in most folks' homes. Candles and flashlights are always a part of a well prepared home. But candles burn out in a short time and are a bit unsafe, while flashlight batteries soon weaken and die. We have four filled kerosene lamps on top of the cupboards at all times, along with two Coleman lamps (including replacement globes, in case of breakage, and extra mantles). The kerosene lamps are nice, but we like to read on stormy nights, and you can about go blind try-

ing to read by kerosene unless it is a pricey Aladdin lamp.

As with the heating fuel, be sure you have adequate fuel stored outside, where it is safe.

Emergency lighting in a vehicle is also necessary. As I said, we have a Coleman lamp in the truck at all times, but we also have a box of 12-inch candles and a good flashlight as well. Having light in the vehicle can provide cheer but more important, it may prevent your rig from being hit by a passing motorist as well as greatly improving your chances of having someone see your problem and stop to help.

## Sanitation

About everyone takes flushing the toilet for granted—until it won't flush. For this reason, be sure you have at least 50 gallons of water available for sanitation reasons, alone. You don't need super-clean water to flush a toilet. After all, you know what you're flushing. You can melt snow or go to a nearby ditch, pond or creek and haul water to dump into the toilet, but even this water should be used frugally. Only flush the solid stuff, putting toilet paper in a bag to dispose of later. Don't be so frugal that you plug the toilet. Flush when you must, not just out of habit. For this reason, keep a bucket of water next to the toilet, but don't dump it in the back, as most folks will automatically flush when they're done, without thinking. This way you will save much water.

Keep in mind that there are usually 30 to 50 gallons of clean water in the water heater after the pressure is gone. You can draw this water off through the faucet on the bottom using a short length of garden hose. But be sure the electricity or gas is turned off first, because without water the dry tank may burn out when the power comes on. A water bed is also a source of sanitation water, but it should never be used for drinking water because of the

chemicals and contact with non-food-grade plastic.

If possible, have an outhouse in your yard. Yes, an outhouse. Even a large lot in the city can house an outhouse, carefully built to resemble a garden shed, and only used for emergencies. I know it's against code, but so is a bucket full of poop in the bathroom. Personally, I'd rather use the outhouse, being discrete, i.e., sneaky, if necessary.

Sanitation also includes things such as sanitary napkins, toilet paper, diapers, etc. There should be a good supply of all of these plus soap, deodorant, and bleach in the pantry. (We've spent so long in the woods, that we **never** leave home without a good supply of toilet paper. The heck with American Express.)

Even when a baby is kept in cloth diapers, it is a great idea to keep a couple of bags of the right size disposable diapers in a closet and one in the vehicle. Washing dirty diapers is never fun, but in an emergency it is **not** what you need to be doing.

A few sanitary napkins crammed in the glove box of the vehicle can save the day—or days. We also keep a small container of baby wipes and a bar of soap there too. In your house, sanitary products should be available to supply the family for two years. The same goes for laundry detergent.

One note here: You can wash clothes in a sink, tub, or bucket, but having an old wringer washing machine around, powered by a portable, inexpensive generator which can also provide electricity for short periods, will make laundry day a snap. In the mountains, we ran the generator once a week while I washed clothes and Bob and David watched a movie on our VCR—a real treat for all of us.

Even in the winter, clothes can be dried on a line outdoors, although it takes a week during very cold weather to get them thoroughly dry.



*Two stages of emergency travel—snowmobile and horse.  
Survival kits and tools are stowed safely onboard.*

## Transportation

Having reliable transportation is essential in any emergency situation. Keeping a vehicle in the best shape you can afford is necessary. Having a thousand dollar stereo system means nothing if the gas tank is kept empty and the fan belt needs replacing. Good tires, belts, hoses, windshield wipers, a good spare tire, jack, a tire iron that fits the lugs, jumper cables, and a tool box with good, commonly used auto tools including a battery terminal cleaner are needed in any well-prepared vehicle. In snow country we always carry a set of heavy tire chains for at least the front end of our 4x4 pickup, and if we expect severe weather we carry a full set. Every auto or other vehicle should carry tire chains to increase traction on snow and ice. Have the means to keep those chains tight, too, as loose chains break or are thrown.

Preparing a vehicle should also include keeping necessary fluids in the trunk. These are oil, brake fluid, starter fluid, gas line antifreeze, windshield wash, transmission fluid (automatic transmission), and radiator coolant/antifreeze. In an emergency, you may not have access to them when you desperately need them.

A bag of sand for added traction, a shovel, a length of hardware cloth (for traction when stuck), a fire extinguisher, a tow chain, and a pair of old gloves for dirty work are also great additions to the trunk.

It is an excellent idea to have a pair of five-gallon gas cans full of fresh gas at home, stored safely outdoors, but handy. And to keep the gas tank nearly full at all times. You never know when you may have to take an injured or ill person to a hospital in the night or evacuate your home because of a storm, civic disturbance, or even a toxic spill from a passing truck. And at such times you don't want to have to search for a gas station. As with food, rotate your gasoline, as stale gasoline will not be a dependable fuel.

In addition, we always carry an extra upper radiator hose, fan belt, box of fuses, and a roll of duct tape behind the seat of our pickup. The radiator hose and fan belt are easy and quick to change, and duct tape will temporarily repair a host of breaks.

A Chilton's repair manual for your vehicle is also a good idea as it provides the specs for your particular vehicle, and it explains in detail how to repair hundreds of common, and uncommon, problems. Likewise, a road atlas and compass are invaluable in the vehicle.

## Family readiness

There are a few things that the family should sit down and discuss. Everyone in the family should know how to shut off the gas at the meter or propane tank when hurricanes or tornadoes threaten, or in case of earthquake to prevent possible explosion or fire. Every member should also know how to shut off the power to the house from the main box to prevent electrocution accidents. You should also

have a plan as to where to meet should an emergency find the family separated.

In case of fire, there should be a plan for escaping from the house and for handling small fires, and everyone should know how to use the fire extinguishers and know where they are located, both in the house and the vehicle. As explained earlier, all members of the family should also have knowledge of basic first aid.

It is an excellent idea to have cash available at all times at home. Some folks advise having enough in savings to cover the house payment, utilities, etc. for six months to provide a safety net in case one of the wage earners is laid off, fired, or injured and unable to return to work for a few months. But a family should have cash stored in a safe place at home to cover local emergencies or an evacuation. Remember that in power outages credit cards and ATMs will **not** work, and banks are not likely to be open.

## Personal preparedness

It is an excellent idea to have a backpack with you wherever you are, i.e., your home, on the road, or workplace, that contains at least enough emergency gear for three full days. This should include basic first aid supplies, a space blanket, MREs, Spam or other filling, a lighter, knife, pocket transistor radio, toilet paper, change of warm socks, compass, water, minimal fishing gear like a length of line and a few small hooks and flies, and a length of snare wire.

Even the kids appreciate some “survival” gear in their own backpacks, provided as per age and experience. The better prepared they are, the safer they will be.

We never leave the ranch, even to go hunting in familiar territory, without a fanny pack containing basic survival gear and a few strips of jerky, trail mix, and candy bars. I also routinely carry two lighters, two pocket knives (one with a screwdriver blade

and can opener), and a film canister in my pocket containing a few feet of fishing line and a couple of small hooks. My husband, Bob, carries a belt knife, pocketknife, and a Leatherman tool—which is many tools in one.

Who knows when an ankle may be severely sprained, and we may have to wait for some time to be “rescued.” Personally, I’d rather be rescued sitting in front of a small fire, munching on jerky and drying my socks than sitting huddled in the cold, looking pathetic.

In our truck, we even carry a telescoping fishing rod and a complete fly vest, full of lightweight tackle, as well as a rifle and box of ammunition. We travel in pretty remote country a lot, and could quite possibly need the rifle to signal for help—three shots in a row—or to bring in some food should we be stranded for some time.

As you can see, preparedness is a personal art, depending on your location, where you could possibly end up in an emergency, your lifestyle, experience, and your perspective on future hard times.

Most families can deal with major emergency situations with relative ease. And you get better with practice. If you get so you deal with preparedness as a sort of game, rather than an emergency in the future, you can get very good at dealing with problems and hard times. When a person or family feels that they are working to be secure, they are less apt to feel helpless or at the mercy of fate and can go happily on about their business, no matter what is going on around them. Preparedness becomes an art, and the whole family can suggest ways to improve, with enthusiasm instead of fear. Δ

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### Liferiver

*The river of time that is my life  
began small and slow.  
Barely moving.  
Taking what seemed to be  
forever  
to reach the bend ahead  
that promised to  
carry me down to sights and places  
I dreamed about  
in my youthstreams...  
streams so shallow and banks so  
close  
I almost believed that time would  
stand still  
as my ambition dried in the sun.*

*But rain came. Storms.  
Bringing more water than banks  
could  
hold, sweeping my thoughts along  
so quickly they were but lost  
as the current carried them around  
the bend  
and beyond.*

*Now youthstreams seem sweet as I  
am awash in  
events and people and things that  
bob to the surface  
for a moment  
only to be pulled under  
before I can see  
or feel them.  
The bank is so far away  
I wonder if it exists  
or if I’m rolling along  
Without Bounds.*

Melissa Sullivan  
Petersburg, IL

*A way of life that is odd or even  
erratic but interferes with no rights  
or interests of others is not to be  
condemned because it is different.*

Warren E. Burger  
Chief Justice  
United States Supreme Court



## Here are four sure catfish baits

By Rev. J.D. Hooker

I guess there is a pretty large share of the fishing fraternity who look down on the “lowly” bottom-feeding catfish. They classify it more as a “trash” fish than as any type of game fish. Probably most of these folks have never wrestled in a really big cat, though, and they’ve surely never enjoyed a platter of catfish fried up by someone who really knows their way around a skillet. Those of us who’ve done both have a tremendously higher opinion of these whiskered fish.

Before you can start enjoying all of those delicious fried catfish however, you’ve got to catch a few. It’s likely that just about every sort of bait the human mind can devise has been tried on cats at one time or another, from red worms to chunks of cheese to some really sickening stink-bait concoctions. At some time or another, I guess I’ve tried most of them. But for the past several years I’ve relied on only four baits for catfish. If the cats won’t bite on at least one of these, they just aren’t going to bite on anything.

As I just finished adding 200 lbs. of catfish meat to our deep-freeze this morning, all taken from one trotline set for one night, I guess I know what I’m talking about. Especially when you consider that there aren’t any big rivers in this area—so all these cats came from a river shallow enough for me to wade across almost its entire length. Anyway, try these baits, and expect results.

**1. Ivory soap chunks:** Use a fine-toothed saw, like a hacksaw or coping saw, to cut a bar of “Ivory” soap into a dozen chunks, then bore a hole in each chunk to insert a treble hook. Affix one of these baited hooks to the end of your line, and add a fairly heavy sinker about a foot above the bait. Just cast out, tighten your line, and wait for

a cat to take it. It’s been at least 20 years since an elderly catfishing enthusiast showed me this trick. It was the only catfish bait he’d ever used. The reason Ivory bar soap is attractive to cats is because it’s real soap and real soap is made with fat. The other things we call soap are chemical products, and the cats can tell the difference, even if you can’t.

**2. Catfish cookies:** Go to a drug store and purchase a small bottle of anise oil. Be certain it’s anise *oil*, as anise *extract* isn’t nearly as effective. Mix the oil with a cup of milk, then add enough flour, corn meal, or other thickener to make a thick doughy paste. Work balls of this paste onto bait-holder style treble hooks, then bake in a medium-hot oven, until firm but not hard.

Usually I rig and fish this bait in the same manner as with Ivory soap chunks. Sometimes though, better results seem to happen when you rig it on a 6-inch dropper line, about a foot above the sinker, as a second bait.

**3. Worm gobs:** Just use a large single hook and thread as many night-crawlers or other worms on the hook as you can fit. While catfish feed primarily by scent, they can see too. So it seems like maybe once they’ve located this bait using their powerful olfactory senses, the sight of this wiggly mass helps to entice them into a good solid hit. Fish this about 6 inches off the bottom.

**4. Fresh blood bait:** When you’re butchering, whether it be hogs, chickens, or whatever, catch some of the blood and pour it into containers. You can freeze it for later use, or mix up some bait right away. It will stay good for at least a couple of weeks. Mix together enough blood and cornmeal to form a very thick paste. Place it in some type of covered container and refrigerate overnight to “blend.”

To use it, bury a treble hook (a single hook works almost as well) in a gob of this dough. Wait awhile, until the outside of the bait just starts to crust over. Then fish this bait from a few inches to a foot off the bottom.

Trotlining, I use all four baits on the same set-up, running something like this: Ivory, cookies, worms, blood-bait, Ivory, cookies, worms, blood-bait, over and over until I’ve filled all the hooks. Using limb lines, or set lines, I use all four baits together as well. Pole fishing, I try one bait at a time, until I see which gives me the best results at that particular time and place.

Like I’ve already said; if the cats won’t hit on at least one of these baits, they’re simply not going to hit on anything. Try them, and see for yourself; I’m quite sure you’ll come to agree.

### Cook 'em right

Just to keep you catfishing, I’m going to include my favorite method for enjoying your catch. My wife got this recipe from her West Virginia grandmother, who got it from hers, who got it who knows where.

Clean and cool the fish (preferably on crushed ice) as soon as possible after catching. Cut extra large catfish into inch-thick steaks; all others just remove the heads and fins, clean and skin. Place cleaned and well rinsed catfish in a large bowl or other container and add milk just to cover. Cover container and chill overnight.

Melt about half an inch of bacon grease in a heavy iron skillet. Dip each piece of catfish in lightly beaten egg, then roll in cornmeal seasoned with salt and pepper. Fry a few pieces at a time in the hot bacon grease until just nicely browned, turning once. Drain on paper towels and serve hot with your favorite side dishes.

After dinner, give the milk the catfish had been soaking in to your cats. They’ll love it, it’s good for them, and it traditionally brings luck on your next catfishing outing. Δ

## Homemade wax bullets let you practice shooting on a budget

By Martin Markham

**T**wenty years ago, as a young man, I read an article dealing with the firing of wax projectiles via the use of primer power. I had no access to firearms then (my parents owned none), so the article was quickly forgotten.

At age 25, while serving in the Marine Corps, I purchased my first handgun—a Smith&Wesson, 6-inch model 629. It was the beginning of my love affair with firearms. And I've owned many revolvers, pistols and rifles over the years. My current love is a Colt 6-inch Kodiak.

But although I love to fire my guns, I hate reaching into my pocket for the funds necessary to do so. And while in the process of purchasing another box of 50 rounds of .44 magnum, I remembered that article I had read 20 years before. I told the proprietor I no longer wished to buy the ammo. Instead I asked him if he had a device for hand priming cartridges. He did—a Lee auto primer. I purchased the auto primer, the proper case holder, and 50 rounds of unprimed brass, along with a supply of large pistol primers. Then I went to a grocery and purchased some household wax—the kind used as sealant in homecanning.

At home I melted the wax in a double boiler and poured it into a shallow pan of stainless steel to the half-inch level. When the wax had cooled to the point of being solidified, yet still soft

enough so that the unprimed cartridges could be easily pressed into it, I pressed all 50 cartridges into it. After they cooled (I placed the pan in the snow outside to hasten the process), a slight rocking motion when extricating each cartridge resulted in a perfect wad-cutter type wax projectile.



I used the Lee auto primer to prime the cartridges, and I fired six rounds at a paper target. The resulting group was about the size of a quarter.

I've been using the wax bullets for several weeks now and only one problem has been noted—after 20 rounds or so it is necessary to run a bore brush, moistened in Hoppe's #9, through the barrel, then make one pass with a dry patch, as the wax fouls the grooves. When this happens, the wax projectiles become elongated when fired, resulting in a loss of accuracy, although the loss of accuracy is not extreme. Also, the failure to take care of this after a practice session may cause a normal round to bulge the barrel, or even split it or explode, so due

care is needed to clean the barrel of residual wax.

I know that rubber and plastic bullets are available for practice sessions, but at \$10 dollars per 50 you don't want to lose any. Being that I enjoy informal plinking at aluminum cans, recovering of expended projectiles would be a chore. With the wax projectiles recovery is unnecessary. And each round costs less than two cents.

When all the wax rounds are expended, I use a nail of the proper diameter and a small hammer to deprime each cartridge case and the process is repeated. I see no reason that the cartridges can not be used indefinitely as the pressures developed by using only a primer for propulsion come nowhere near those developed when lead bullets are propelled by smokeless powder.

I believe that this concept could be used by a great number of people to safely practice the firing of their firearms in their own back yard with minimal noise and cost. I see no reason why this concept could not be adapted to semiautomatic pistols, although manual cycling of the action would, of course, be necessary after each shot. Δ

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# Protect your small buildings from wind damage

By Harry G. Nemec

Ever wished your small sheds and outbuildings were anchored down during a particularly violent storm? I sure have. With hurricanes in the East and Southeast, tornadoes in the South and Midwest, and a powerful El Nino taking hold on the Pacific Coast, you may want to do what I've done and anchor down some of your sheds and outbuildings. You'll sleep a little easier during those ferocious storms.

Here's how I anchored my shed:

I measured where I would attach an anchored post to the inside frame of the shed. The intent was to firmly attach a well anchored, pressure-treated post to the inside framing of the shed. I began by using eight-foot treated "landscape" posts which would be fastened from the outside of the building to the inside frame with half-inch galvanized bolts. Had I been building the shed from scratch, I would have put the anchors inside the frame where they could not be seen.

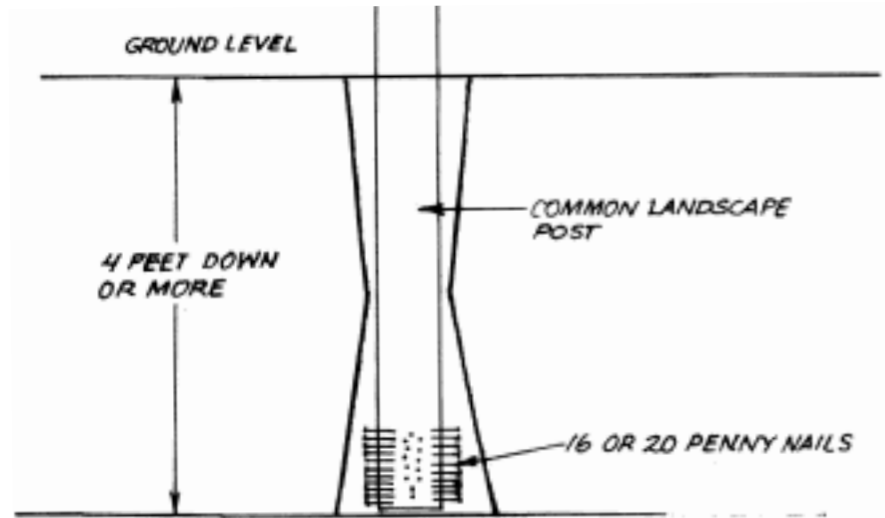


Figure 1. Detail of hole

Using the post hole digger, I dug down as far as I could outside the six studs I was going to attach to, then widened the holes to accommodate the spread of the post hole digger handles.

Once the holes were four-foot deep, which allowed at least three feet of the posts to be buried (don't forget the one foot elevation of the shed above

ground), I drove 16 and 20-penny nails about half way into the lower part of each post. The purpose of the nails is to provide an irregular surface to which the concrete could adhere (see Figure 1).

A mixture of a couple of inches of concrete was then poured into each hole to make a "footer" for each post to rest on.

I then dipped the nailed portion of each post into a five-gallon bucket of water, then lowered them into the holes. I then poured wet concrete into the hole, making sure it was reaching all areas around the nails. The rest of the area around the posts was filled with a mixture of concrete and damp dirt. Because of the dampness of the soil in this area, the balance of the hole was filled alternately with powdered cement and wet soil. I then drilled holes through the shed studs and railroad ties to accept bolts used to attach the anchor posts to the shed (see Figure 2).

My total cost for this project was under \$40, plus two days labor. That is cheaper than rebuilding the shed. Δ

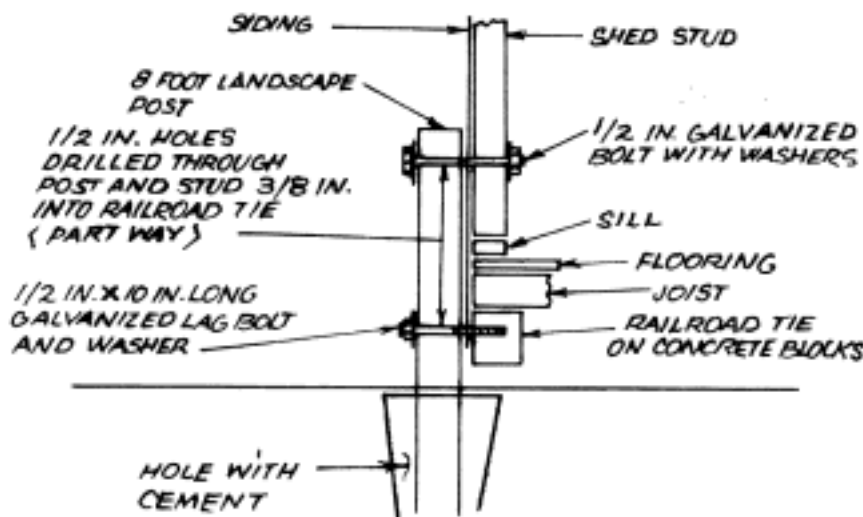
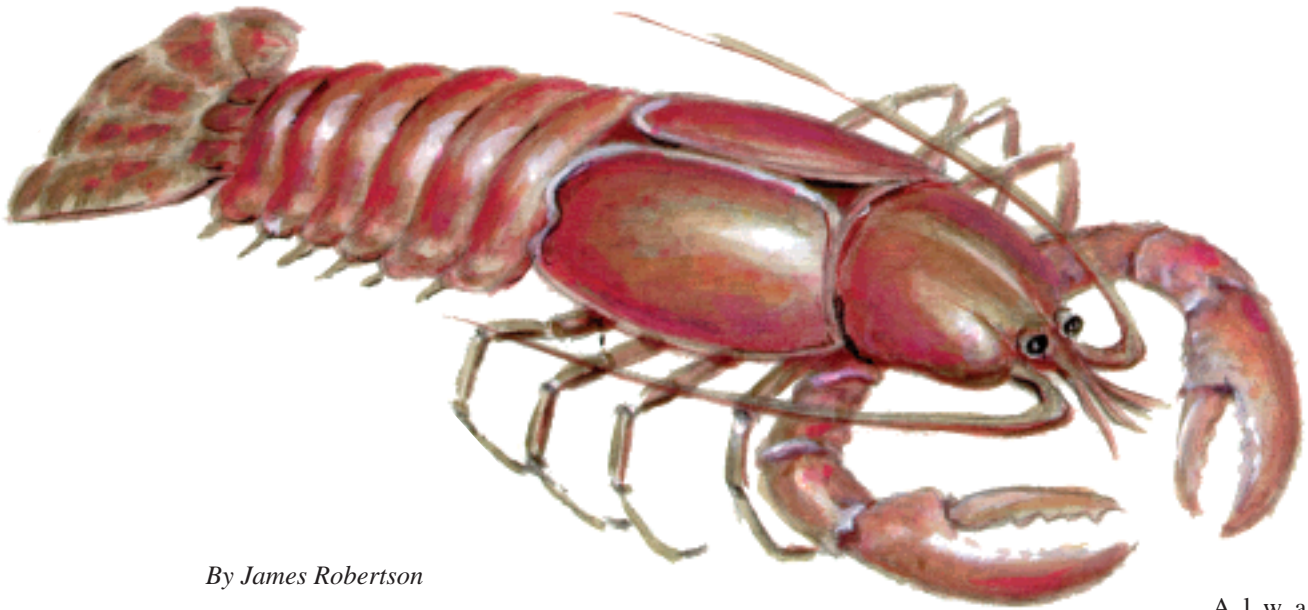


Figure 2. Detail of attachment to shed



## “You squeezes de tail an’ sucks de haid”



By James Robertson

**H**aving spent my life growing up in the Atchafalaya flood basin (Morgan City) of Louisiana, I know a little about crawfish.

Earlier articles in *Backwoods Home Magazine* have pretty much covered everything from the different species to catching, farming, and making a living with these prehistoric-looking crustaceans. Some of the articles were “Small-scale crayfish farming is a profitable business” in the *Best of the First Two Years* anthology; “Farming crayfish for a living” in Issue Number 16 and in the *Third Year* anthology; and “How to make a living with wild crayfish” in Issue Number 22. However, in the “how to eat” department, I found there is still room for discussion.

How do you eat a crawfish? Any self-respecting Cajun will tell you, “You squeezes de tail an’ sucks de haid.” It may sound far out, but for generations of Cajuns that’s the etiquette at a crawfish boil or soiree.

Being of the opinion that Cajuns are the experts, I will share with you these traditional crawfish recipes:

### Boiled crawfish

1 sack of live crawfish (35 - 40 pounds)  
2 (26-ounce) boxes of salt  
5 medium onions, halved  
1/2 (4-ounce) bottle Cayenne pepper  
7 lemons, halved  
3 pods garlic, halved  
4 ounces liquid crab boil or 2 boxes crab boil mix  
10 gallons cold water

**A l w a y s**  
wash the crawfish and pick out the dead ones before cooking. Place water and seasonings in a 30-gallon pot. Cover and bring to a full boil. Lower heat and add crawfish. Some cooks add potatoes and corn to the pot during boiling. Return to a full boil and continue boiling for five to eight minutes. Turn off heat and soak covered for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from water promptly to prevent overcooking and heap onto paper-covered table. Peel and enjoy. Serves five to six.

### Crawfish fettucine

1/2 cup butter  
1 pound crawfish tails  
1 teaspoon soy sauce  
1 medium onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
salt and pepper  
6 ounces fettucine noodles, cooked and drained  
2 tablespoons butter, melted  
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

Melt butter in a saucepan. Stir in crawfish, soy sauce, onion, garlic, salt, and pepper. Sauté until onions and garlic are wilted. Toss fettucine with two tablespoons butter and Parmesan cheese until nicely coated. To serve, mound warm noodles on a plate and spoon the crawfish mixture over it. Serves four. Δ

## Grow windowsill peppers the year-round

By Lance and Jennifer Barker

If you live in a cool climate, hot peppers probably don't do very well in your garden. It doesn't matter if it's wet or dry where you live: the climate and reasons may be different, but the effect is the same. If you live in a cool dry climate, the days are plenty sunny and warm, but the nights are another story. You could lose your pepper plants to frost on July 4th. If you live in a moist, temperate climate, there probably aren't enough warm, sunny days in a row to ripen and develop a pepper's heat before autumn's foggy dew hits.

We live in a high desert area, where frosts can hit any night of the year. Growing peppers outdoors is out of the question for us. However, since hot peppers seem to be one of the basic food groups at our house, we have found a way around the perennial problem of how to grow them. After trying many different varieties, we finally found that "Grandpa's Home Pepper" does very well on a bright window sill, and produces a pepper that will get semi-hot where most won't develop much flavor. Its pretty foliage and red and green peppers brighten up our winter windowsills considerably.

### Grow windowsill peppers

This little pepper is a joy to grow. The seed germinates easily at room temperature. Just plant a few in a small pot, water, and cover the pot with plastic wrap to make a mini-greenhouse. Place the pot in a warm, bright spot away from direct sunlight until you see the first sprouts. Then remove the wrap and transfer the pot to the windowsill.

The pepper grows into a compact and aesthetic house plant. It is easily espaliered to a desired shape. Our 4

year old plant fits a 10" pot and is trimmed to a fan-shape to take advantage of window-light and space. And it is tasty and productive, generally



holding at least a dozen peppers ranging from blossoms to red-ripe. Though the plant is small, we have had as many as 50 peppers on our plant at once.

Seed is easily saved by letting a pepper mature completely on the plant until it is very red and begins to shrivel and soften. Then you can remove the seed for drying. You can still use the pepper for eating (whoo-eee! hot!!). Of course, how hot the peppers

will be when ripe still depends somewhat on the intensity of sunlight. Ours are hottest in spring and fall when the strong sun floods through our windows, and somewhat less hot in summer when the high sun angle prevents the plant getting as much direct sun. Peppers are about 1 to 1 1/2 inches long and wedge-shaped.

### Use in crafts

You can use these lovely little peppers for Christmas crafts, such as wreaths and swags, by drying them. Just wait until you have red-ripe peppers. Don't neglect to pick and eat the peppers that you don't want to save for crafts, as this will allow the plant to direct more energy into ripening the ones left on it. When it has ripened the peppers you want, clip the individual peppers with their stems from where they attach to the branch. Using florist's wire and green tape, make a "stem" by poking the wire through the thick part of the pepper's own short stem. Bend the wire back straight on both sides of the stem, then wrap the green tape around it tightly, starting at the end closest to the pepper. Now you have a handle with which to hang the pepper to dry, and a stem to bind into your wreaths and swags (even corsages, why not?).

Bill McDorman of High Altitude Gardens found "Grandpa's Home Pepper" in Siberia, where they don't have much of an outdoor growing season. You can get it from him at: Seeds Trust, PO Box 1048, Hailey, ID 83333.

### Stir-fried tempeh and vegetables

These peppers have a nice flavor with a real nice afterburn. One finely slivered pepper will generally do for

dinner for two people who like a nice warmth, but not a burning fire. Try these peppers in chili. Saute them up with minced garlic, then toss with steamed new potatoes. Mince a pepper finely and simmer in corn or bean soup.

One good pepper ought to nicely flavor a stir-fry for two.

This is basic fare around our house when the veggies roll out of the garden, or in winter with root-cellar vegetables, and nicely serves two:

**Ingredients:**

1 cup raw brown rice, cooked according to directions  
1 Tbsp. peanut or sesame oil  
1 tsp. minced fresh ginger root  
2 or 3 cloves garlic, minced  
4 oz. (½ cake) tempeh  
¼ cup raw cashews  
1 small hot pepper, finely minced  
a heap of vegetables, however much you think you'll eat  
suggestion for the vegetables:  
winter—two carrots, a white turnip, and ½ head savoy cabbage  
summer—baby carrots, baby zucchini, and a big bunch of greens

**Method:**

Chop or slice all your vegetables and divide them into long-cooking ones and quick-cooking ones. Dice the tempeh into small diamond-shaped pieces (or however you like). Heat your wok or skillet over medium-high, and add the oil, garlic, and ginger. Stir-fry briefly, then add the tempeh, cashews, and hot pepper. Stir-fry for a minute or two until the tempeh and cashews begin to turn golden.

Add the long-cooking vegetables along with a little water, cover, and allow to steam, covered, for a few minutes. When the vegetables are just beginning to be tender, add the quick-cooking vegetables and steam or stir-fry until done. Serve over the cooked rice, with tamari on the side. Δ

**Sunday Mornings**

Sunday mornings  
Our mother made us get ready--  
Me in a tie,  
My sister in a dress--  
Then she'd hand us each an offering envelope  
Containing a quarter, sometimes thirty-five cents;  
(We didn't have much to share, even with God)  
And admonish us  
"Make sure you both go to church,"  
And she'd watch us through the window  
As we walked down Marshall Street  
To Winthrop Street  
And took a right--  
Me in wingtips, tie, and cufflinks,  
My sister in heels, dress, and hat--  
Going to the First Methodist Church.  
And if we listened we might even hear the organ start up  
As we walked by,  
But not before I noted the title of the morning's sermon on the church marquee  
Which on that particular morning was:  
"Separating the Wheat from the Chaff."  
And we walked up to Greenleaf Avenue  
Down Brookings Street  
To George street,  
Tearing open the envelopes and taking the money  
Just before we got to the Friendly Spa.  
Then for the next hour, we walked the streets;  
Me in my wingtips, tie, and cufflinks, hair combed, face washed,  
My sister in her heels, dress, hat, a Sunday purse, and nylons,  
Eating candy bars, drinking soda, walking, talking, telling jokes,  
And, when we got home,

Mother was at the door.  
"Did you go to church?"  
"Yes," my sister said,  
And, "Yes," I mimicked  
Never quite understanding why she was so suspicious  
And I don't know why  
But she always made the mistake of asking me--  
Perhaps because I was the younger and thought to be  
More ingenuous--  
"What was the sermon about?"  
And on that particular Sunday  
I looked her in the eye and said,  
"It was something about the wheat and the chaff..  
And how the good are separated from the evil  
By the wind that is God's breath...  
Like he's harvesting our souls,  
And there was something about making bread from the wheat  
Which was like Resurrection and..."  
My sister nodded as I spoke  
But I think she was as amazed as our mother would have been  
Had she realized I was making it all up  
And finally she said, "Okay, okay..."  
But I was just getting warmed up  
And, if I had to walk the streets on Sunday morning,  
She had to listen to my sermon.  
And I could keep it up until she walked away.  
Then I went to my room and removed my tie and wingtips  
And tossed my cufflinks on the bureau,  
While my sister changed out of her dress and heels in her own room,  
And the rest of Sunday was never as good as that walk.

**John Silveira**  
**Ojai, CA**



# Winter in the backwoods is *a lot* more pleasant if you use these tips to stay warm and dry

By Don Fallick

**W**inters in the backwoods can be beautiful, but they lose some of their charm when you must spend many hours each day working there, in all kinds of weather. Surviving the wet and cold and even enjoying them requires proper equipment, especially a proper wardrobe. This need not be terribly expensive, as long as you pay attention to three basic principles: your clothes must protect you from water, cold, wind, and physical hazards; they must be fit for vigorous work; and they must be layered for easy adaptation to different conditions.

## Layers

Each of these requirements is very important. A friend once gave me a military surplus "Alaska survival suit." It weighed about twenty pounds—way too heavy for comfort. It was way too warm for comfort, too. The slightest effort while wearing it caused me to overheat, even in zero degree weather. Zipped up tight, it was water repellent and kept the wind off, but I sweated so much with it on that I had to keep it unzipped. And it was hard to get on and off. Eventually I gave it away, too. It is much more practical to dress in layers. When it's really cold, I wear thermal underwear, a couple of layers of pants, a wool shirt with quilted lining, one or two hooded sweatshirts or sweaters, a ski mask and wool stocking cap, and a windproof jacket.

Dressed in layers like this, I am quite warm even in blizzard conditions, yet I can easily shed a few layers to work in the barn. If the jacket gets wet, the damp is unlikely to pene-

trate two sweatshirts or sweaters, yet it protects them from rips, snags, and abrasion. Any wind that gets through the outer layers is stopped by the quilted shirt, and a ski mask or wool scarf protects my face from the cold and wind. Sometimes I'll wear insulated coveralls as part of my winter "uniform," if I know I'm going to be outdoors a long time. Only you will know your usual routine, so only you can decide exactly what to wear, but here is some general information:

## Head

Your head contains more than 10% of the surface area of your body, and virtually none of the insulating fat. It's one of the best places to lose heat. It's also one of the hardest to insulate, since your eyes and nose must be at least partly exposed so you can see and breathe. For really windy conditions, I wear a ski mask, plus some type of windproof hood. In bitter cold weather, a wool stocking cap will insulate your head and ears. I wear it right over the ski mask with a thick wool scarf around my neck and throat. Wool is just about twice as warm as



*Ready for work on a winter day*

polyester. I don't use cotton: it soaks up moisture from your breath. Densely woven wool retains much of



*When it's really cold, stay warm and dry by wearing layers of garments and shed layers as needed to adapt to changing temperatures and work situations.*

its warmth, even when soaking wet. Ear muffs can protect your ears, but they tend to get caught when walking or working in the woods. So do hooded parkas. A hunting cap with ear flaps, or a hooded sweatshirt combined with a cap or hat, can help keep out the wind, while restricting vision less than the hood of a parka.

## **Torso and legs**

A parka hood is either off or on, but backwoods activities are varied, and weather conditions can change quickly. Walking through an open meadow, you may need all the head and face insulation you've got. Splitting firewood on a clear cold day, you may need no head covering at all. But what if you're splitting firewood and it's snowing? With a parka, you have only two choices, but with layers you can adjust to the precise needs of the moment.

The same principle applies to the torso. I begin with "thermal knit" long johns. The knit pattern makes small air pockets when covered with another layer of clothing, and still air is the best insulator. In fact, all insulated clothing works on the principle of trapping small pockets of still air. Cotton "thermals" are lighter, softer, and thinner than wool underwear, and cooler when not covered by outer layers. I know lots of people who habitually dress in thermals alone indoors during the winter months, adding outer clothing only when going outdoors.

What you wear on top of them depends a great deal on what you will be doing. As a land surveyor, I must walk long distances, but do relatively little work with my arms. So I wear several layers of very warm shirts to keep my chest and arms warm, but only a pair of jeans and maybe a non-insulated coverall on my legs. Cutting firewood, the situation is reversed, so I dress lighter above the waist, and warmer below. If I had to stand perfectly still for long periods of time,



insulated, wind-proof coveralls would be handy, but they are very expensive, and I don't have many occasions for their use.

I have owned several down jackets in my life. They are warm, light, and expensive. Like parkas, they do best in a situation where activities are not expected to vary much. Holofil jackets are nearly as warm and light, are much cheaper, and retain more warmth when wet. Down is better for backpackers and campers, who need to economize on bulk and weight. When you live in the backwoods, these considerations are much less important.

Other types of recreational gear suffer from similar problems. Ski clothes and snowmobile suits are not intended for work. Ski clothes are warm and don't restrict motion, but are easily damaged, very expensive, and not conducive to layering. Snowmobile suits are very warm, but heavy and restrictive. They are fine if you use a snowmobile to get around, but if you

do, you probably already own appropriate gear.

Wool shirts are warm and durable, but scratchy, expensive, and heavier than cotton. Cotton flannel shirts with quilted linings can be nearly as warm as wool, at a fraction of the cost and twice the comfort, and they do not shrink. A good wool shirt can last a lifetime, if properly cared for, but not everybody likes wool or can afford it. Excellent lined flannel shirts can be mail-ordered from Sears stores at reasonable prices.

For durability, wind resistance, and general practicality, nothing beats a pair of good jeans. But did you know you can also buy flannel-lined versions? They cost more than regular jeans, but are lots warmer. I survived quite comfortably through two Colorado winters on the farm, wearing only my "thermals," lined jeans, and quilted flannel shirt. I had a down jacket, but wore it only for winter motorcycling. Lined jeans can be mail-ordered too.

In high wind situations, like motorcycling, you need protection from wind and wind-driven moisture more than cold. One winter in Colorado, I commuted 14 miles to my job every night with no problems. I used a nylon rain parka and rain pants over my other clothes, and stayed dry and toasty warm, even at night in a snowstorm at 50 mph.

## Feet

No doubt about it—when your feet are cold, your whole body's cold. Even a brief glance through catalogs or the shelves of a shoe store reveals a bewildering variety of outdoor footgear. Which is best? By far the most popular is the "hiking boot" popularized in the 1970's. These are very good for hiking in good weather, or on cleared trails. Just about every "back to the lander" tries them initially—and rejects them as impractical. They are impossible to effectively waterproof. They are too short for walking in snow, and too stiff for real work. Their treads clog with mud which is impossible to dislodge, and you can't get them on or off easily.

For really snowy conditions, nothing beats "Canadian style" snowmobile boots with removable felt liners. The rubber bottoms keep water and snow out, the leather uppers allow the feet to breathe, and the felt liners can be changed when they do get wet. Good ones are relatively expensive, and bad ones are really bad. The felt liners must be replaced often, as they wear thin, allowing the foot to slide around in the boot. They are not comfortable for long walks, but will keep your feet toasty warm even standing in snow for long periods of time.

For real work, nothing is as good as real work boots. Look for Vibram® soles and sturdy lacing hooks, not grommets. Grommetted boots cost a bit less, but you'll hate putting them on every morning. These boots are available in many styles, in lined or unlined versions. I wear the lined ones

all year long. They are not too hot in the summer, and are adequately warm in winter, as long as they can be kept dry. I have tried everything, including shoe polish, snow seal with beeswax, even a special preparation for firemen. All will keep the leather dry for a while, but no preparation I have found will protect boots from a day-long workout in the snow.

Overboots will. They come in four- and five-clasp versions, and several weights. The five-clasp overshoes are taller, coming nearly to the knees. Correctly sized, they are just tight enough at the calf to keep water away from your feet, even if the pants above the knee get soaked.

Medium-duty overboots are easy to walk in, light, and wear out quickly. Usually it is the clasps that break first. Heavy- and extra-heavy-duty boots are more difficult to remove and put on, but they last a reasonable length of time. Look for heavy rubber attachments between the boot and clasps. Extra-heavy-duty boots have thicker rubber soles and tops, are very difficult to put on and (in my opinion) are too heavy for serious walking.

If you decide to wear boots with overboots for winter wear, take your boots with you when you shop for overboots. The sizes stamped on them mean little, as work boots vary in dimension with the style. It's a good idea to buy the work boots in the spring, to be sure you're comfortable with the particular brand and style before buying the overboots in the fall. Like most types of clothing, it is frequently impossible to buy winter shoes in the winter time.

In buying winter boots, it's important to allow enough room for bulky or layered winter socks. If you don't wear wool anywhere else, wear it on your feet if you possibly can. Wool socks aren't much more expensive than cotton socks of similar thickness, but are much, much warmer, wear much better, retain less foot odor, absorb sweat better while staying warm, and provide better padding

underfoot. Their one real disadvantage is that many people can't tolerate wool directly against their skin. They chafe, their skin breaks down, or they just itch intolerably.

All these problems can be prevented by wearing thin, white, cotton inner socks with thick, warm, woolen outer socks. Some of the dyes used in cotton can be harmful to the skin in a warm, sweaty environment. Better to take no chances, especially if your feet tend to sweat a lot. Many outdoorsmen warn against ever wearing polyester inner socks. It's an almost surefire way to contract a foot fungus.

If you don't have wool socks, you can still gain many of the advantages of layering by wearing two layers of cotton athletic socks. This works better than a single layer of thicker cotton socks, but not as well as wool. Since cotton readily wears thin at the heels, you'll have to replace your socks frequently if you use only cotton. Wool also lends itself to darning, but that's another article.

If you aren't going to be outdoors for more than an hour or so, you may choose to wear Wellington boots with two or three layers of thick socks. These are the knee-high rubber boots sometimes called "irrigators" or "gum boots." They are completely impervious to water and are thick and tough enough for rugged country. The rubber will conduct cold temperatures to your feet quite readily, so it's neces-



*Overboots, worn over work boots*



sary to wear several layers of socks. Used with rain pants over warm clothing, it's possible to walk through hip-deep snow for an hour or more dressed this way. Your feet won't stay toasty warm, but they won't suffer from the cold as long as you come in and warm up periodically.

## Hands

When I was a new recruit, the Army introduced me to my first pair of real gloves. They were thin leather shells with replaceable woolen liners. I've never found a better pair for general winter work. If you'd like to try them, get the genuine military surplus ones. The imitations found in most "surplus" stores have inferior leatherwork, and won't hold up to rough field conditions. A cheaper alternative is to wear cotton knit or Mylar glove liners under some sort of outer glove. The choice will depend on both the weather conditions and on what you intend to do while wearing them.

Ordinary cotton jersey gloves in a size larger than your normal glove size will give just the right amount of room over cotton "string" liners, while allowing enough dexterity for most normal activities. I can write, hammer nails, and even tie knots in string while wearing them. Glove liners cost about a dollar a pair, and the gloves about twice that. The liners are knit in a "thermal" pattern that keeps your hands very warm with little bulk. Jersey gloves will get wet pretty quickly, but are cheap enough that it's easy to keep a second pair around to change into. That's why I don't use fleece-lined gloves. They are so bulky I can't work in them, and if the lining ever does get wet, you can't throw them in the dryer. And if you lose or rip one glove, you've lost a major investment. String liners won't even begin to get wet until the gloves are soaked. I keep an extra pair of liners and two extra pairs of gloves on the dashboard of the truck. If the gloves get wet, the heater will dry them out in

a hurry, and the extra liners are rarely needed. A lost or torn liner is easily replaced. I may not even need to buy another pair, as the liners fit either hand.

One problem with cotton jersey is that it gives little protection from the wind. If wind is more a problem than cold, I wear light-duty leather work gloves in my normal size over Mylar glove liners from the ladies department. They are sparkly, but thin enough to fit under the leather gloves, while insulating my hands from the cold leather. The leather protects the delicate liners while stopping the wind. When it's really cold, but I still need dexterity, I wear three layers: jersey over string liners over Mylar.

For bitter cold conditions, nothing beats fleece-lined leather mittens. They're too bulky for most hand work, but they'll definitely keep your hands warm between jobs. But unless you live in Alaska, they're too hot and too expensive to wear most of the time.

Industrial gloves of many sorts are available to the public. Some claim to protect from cold, wet environments. However, they do not allow the skin to breathe at all, and must be removed periodically to dry off the sweat. Not good for outdoor work. Worse, they are easily ripped, torn, or abraded. Finally, they are too stiff for projects requiring manual dexterity or grip.

## Gadgets

Over the years, I have tried all sorts of gadgets, from electric socks to chemical hand warmers in my jacket pockets. Some worked, some didn't. All had one common failing: they used up energy at a high rate, then were worthless. Most electric socks, gloves, and underwear simply don't work. Those that do are very expensive, but high price is no guarantee that the product is high in quality. The ones that do work go through a set of batteries in a couple of hours. Generating heat is a wasteful use of



*Snowmobile boots*

electricity, about like using a chisel for a screwdriver.

Chemical hand warmers do work well. Their chief disadvantage is that you can't shut them off or turn them down. In an emergency, they could save your hands, but using them on a regular basis would drive anybody broke in a hurry. And they only help while your hands are in your pockets. Even expensive gloves are cheaper and work lots better.

## Sources

Nearly everything listed in this article can be purchased by mail order from Sears, Roebuck & Co. or from J.C. Penney. Check their Fall and Winter catalogs, as well as specialized "Farm & Ranch" catalogs. But they are much cheaper at local farm and ranch suppliers. Mail-order boots can be quite good and reasonably priced, but it's not a good idea to buy them if you're trying to fit both your foot size and your overboot size. String liners and cotton jersey gloves are best purchased in quantity, either from farm stores, hardware stores, or even from local supermarkets. Finally, thrift stores in rural areas often carry good, used winter clothing at surprisingly low prices, especially when purchased "off season." Δ

## Make diapers with flair

*By Alycema K. Paul*

About 45 years ago my aunt, a mother of seven, started making diapers with a flair (and a flare). Before the era of disposable diapers, it was quite common to make one's own cloth diapers. White diaper flannel was readily available, had a nice absorbent quality and measured 27 inches wide. The more common 36 inch width of printed flannel was used for night wear and other clothing. Homemade diapers were usually just hemmed rectangles of material with the advantage that they could be enlarged by a change in the folding as the baby grew. The disadvantage was that they were quite bulky, especially on a small baby.

Store-bought cloth diapers came a variety of ways: the long rectangle type that had to be folded, the kind that were pre-folded and stitched in place, and the fitted hourglass-shaped diapers, which worked well and didn't have as much bulk.

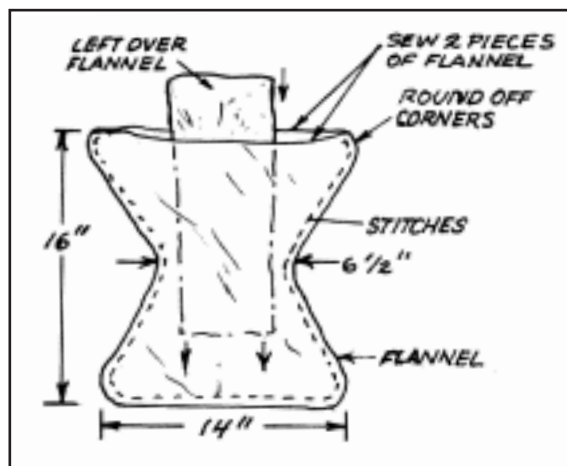
What my creative aunt did was to buy the colored flannel in child prints to make her own hourglass fitted diapers.

As a baby gift, she gave me three dozen diapers with not one duplication in fabric pattern. I was hooked. That was more than 30 years ago, and I'm still into making bright-colored diapers. In the beginning, I made all colors and sizes for my own children (it's easy to up- or down-size the hourglass shape). Now it's for grandchildren, great nieces and nephews, and gifts.

Good companions to make are matching receiving blankets and bibs. These sets make unique baby gifts. The fun part is that the diapers can be a different pattern on each side, and you can have some real wild colors

and/or seasonal designs such as Christmas patterns. Whenever I'm in a fabric store, I look through the remnants for small pieces of flannel, so I always have some on hand to make gifts.

For years, when I made these as baby gifts, young mothers didn't know what to do with them. Some thought they were burping pads or used them as bibs. Cloth diapers were almost a "dirty word," with disposable ones so easy and so readily available.



Now the pendulum is swinging back: money is tighter, environmental consciousness is up, and cloth diapers are back.

So if (like me) you're trying not to be a consumer, keep your eyes on sales and/or the remnant bins at the fabric stores and sew one-of-a-kind baby gifts. If you are lucky enough to live in an Amish area, you can still find the nice 27-inch-wide diaper flannel and birdseye fabric (although it's not flannel, it is a traditional diaper material). I made three dozen diapers with it (it only comes in white) for my daughter-in-law, who prefers this type of material. She says they wear better, and she's right: modern-day printed flannel is quite thin . . . but I am still partial to colored diapers.

Here are the directions for making diapers and blankets:

### Diapers

Make a paper pattern that is 14 inches across the wide ends, 6½ inches wide in the middle by 16½ inches long. This is a good size to start, and sizes can vary to suit the baby. Cut out two hourglass shapes of flannel (same or contrasting color or print). Put the right sides together and sew around edges on three sides with a half-inch seam allowance. Turn diapers right-side-out and put padding on the inside in the narrow part of the diaper. For padding, cut out several layers of left-over flannel. These can be rectangles or the oval shapes left over from cutting out the diapers. Often, especially if they are for a baby boy, and the diapers are toddler size, I make the inside padding almost as long as the diaper's length. This is a good place to use old material such as old flannel pajamas, worn diapers, or old towels. After you turn under the raw edge of the open end and sew across the opening, you should secure the padding by sewing across it in several places.

### Blankets

Take two one-yard squares of flannel, lay the right sides together, sew on three sides, turn right-side-out, fold under the raw edges of the fourth side and stitch closed. Finish off by sewing a few lines horizontally and vertically across the blanket. Or you can get fancy and trace a large heart or other simple design in the center of the blanket and stitch thru both layers as if quilting. A 36 inch square makes a nice size blanket, especially for a newborn. Today it's hard to find nice thick flannel, and it comes in 45 inch widths. I have made blankets 45 inches square, but they seem a little large to me. Δ

# Tofu — healthful, delicious, versatile, and you can make it yourself at home

By Leland Edward Stone

We've never known quite what to call the stuff here in the West. "Soybean cheese" seems like a good name; after all, it's curdled from the "milk" of these legumes. But it's not aged, so perhaps the Asian name is more appropriate. They call it *dou fu*, *tofu*, or simply "bean curd."

Whatever you call it, this creamy white food is just plain good. Low in fat and lacking cholesterol, this high-protein curd lends itself well to any cuisine. Naturally, it's mandatory in Oriental cooking, and it's easy to make at home.

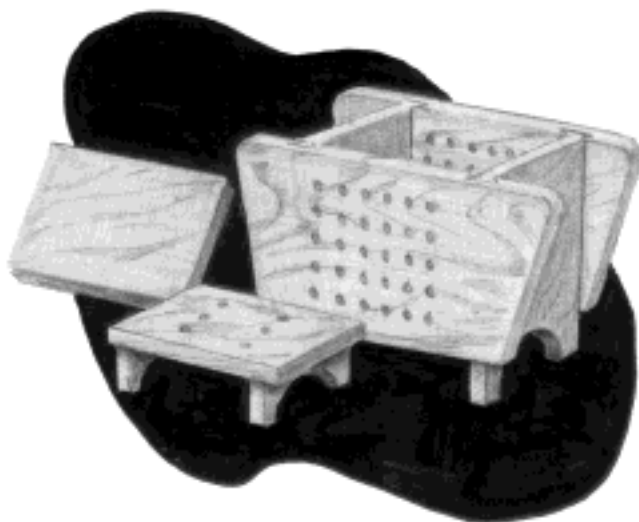
Soybeans are the raw material for making tofu (the standard English word for this food), and most health food stores stock them. But if there's a feed store nearby, buy your supply there. You'll get an excellent price on a 50-pound bag of soybean "meal," which should be opened and checked for freshness. (High oil content means old stock may be rancid.)

While you're shopping, you'll need a few more items. One of them is a *coagulant*, the substance that solidifies soy milk into "cheese." If you live near the ocean, you have a source for the traditional coagulant: *nigari*, or natural sea salt. Favored in Japanese tofu, the high magnesium chloride content is responsible for curdling the new cheese.

For the rest of us, our local drug store is the most likely source. You may ask for magnesium chloride. If the pharmacist looks at you funny, ask for calcium sulfate. If that doesn't work, try asking for calcium carbonate. If that still doesn't work, just grab a box of plaster of Paris or some Epsom salts.

You'll also need a pressing box, which is similar to that which is used for making cheese. (If you have a cheese press, it will work quite well.) While a pressing box is easy to cobble together, you might as well make one that's going to last. There are easy-to-follow-plans for making one at the end of this article, or you can order one from Monterey Woodworks, Box 158, Johannesburg, CA 93528. Finally, you'll need cheesecloth, a colander, and a sturdy sack of coarse muslin or similar material.

That rounds out the list of things needed for *making* tofu. For cooking it, use whatever is fresh from the garden: carrots, onions, cabbage, chilies, broccoli, garlic, or bamboo shoots. You might also want a few things from the market. Pick up some fresh ginger, oyster sauce, soy sauce, and rice wine or sherry. Do they have any baby bok choy? Pick out some nice firm heads of this mild cabbage.



A finished tofu press

## Making tofu

Back at the kitchen, you'll need about an hour for making tofu once you've gotten the basics down pat. Count on investing a bit more time in your first effort.

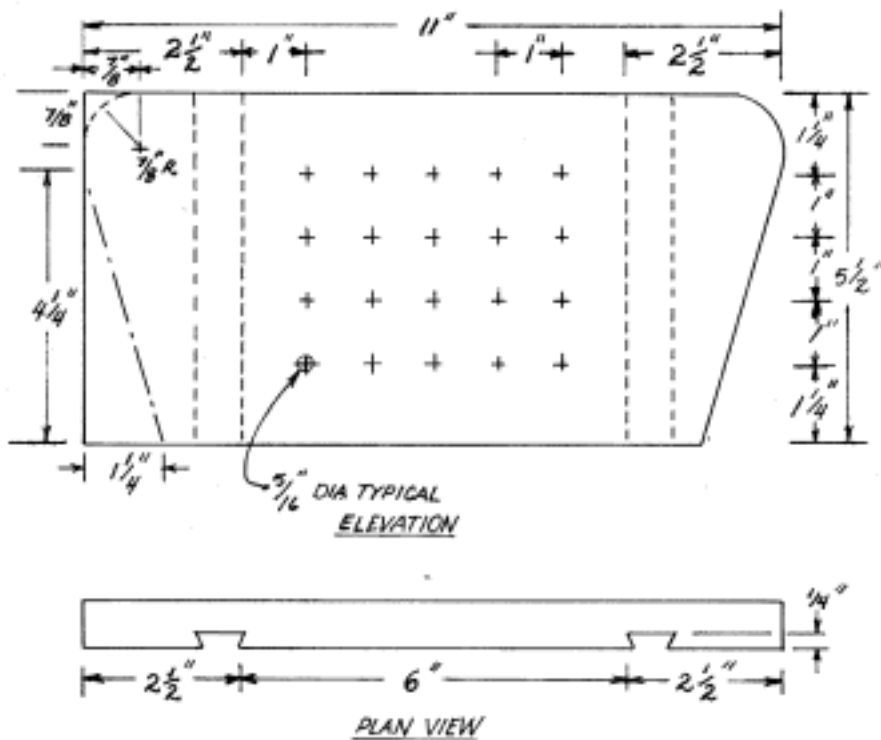
Cooking in the style of Asia is particularly enjoyable. So little fuss about exacting measurements, so much emphasis on *knack* . . . the intuition derived from experience. So it is with making tofu, and in time you'll develop a "feel" for its proportions. But when starting out, you'll want to follow the recipe closely.

2 cups soybean meal (if using whole beans, soak first, then grind coarsely) 20 cups water 2 Tablespoons coagulant plus 2 cups water <i>or</i> 3 cups <i>fresh, clean</i> seawater
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Add one cup meal to two cups of water and soak for 10 minutes. (If using ground, soaked beans, omit soaking.) Puree thoroughly, adding an additional cup of water, then scrape the contents into a pan. Process the rest of the meal, then bring the entire batch to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 10 minutes.

Heating is just the first step in extracting the soy "milk," and it's followed by mechanical extraction. This requires the cotton bag (with its opening upward) to be placed in a colander. Set the colander into a pan to catch the fresh soy





Notes:

Cut dovetail dados first then drill holes using a drill press with a fence attachment for greatest accuracy.

Do all sanding prior to assembly; waterproof adhesive is required.

All stock is 3/4-inch thick.

If a router table is being used—a recommended procedure—set the dovetail bit to height. Now roughly adjust the fence using a 1 3/4-inch wide block of wood. Since the router is “off,” spin the bit by hand. The fence is properly adjusted when the point of the flute just touches—but not marks—the edge of the block. Repeat the process for subsequent setups; change width of block as required.

Figure 1. Press box side panel

milk, and pour the boiled meal into the bag, scraping the pan thoroughly.

Now close the sack and mash the meal until it's dry. Use a potato masher if you wish. If you have a jelly-making board, that's perfect—it's now a tofu-making board. Squeeze the bag to wring loose every last drop of soy milk. Save the grains inside (it's called *okra* in Japanese) for adding to breads or muffins.

Return the collected milk to the stove and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, and cook for about five minutes. Meanwhile, stir the coagulant into a cup of warm tap water (if using *fresh, clean* seawater, use 1 1/2 cups). Remove the simmering milk from the heat, and stir briskly while adding one-third of the liquid coagulant. Stir again, and add another third. Curds should now be forming in the yellow whey. Allow the mixture to stand, adding the final third of coagulant if milky liquid remains after five minutes.

Prepare the tofu form by lining it with cheesecloth and setting it in a pan to catch drippings. Gently pour off the whey, then spoon the curds into the form. Fold the cheesecloth over the curds, put the top of the form in place, and add a weight. A clean brick or rock is traditional, but a heavy can of food works just as well.

Tofu firmness is controlled by the weight and length of its pressing. Japanese tofu is softer, pressed for about 10 minutes under a light (two pound) weight. Chinese-style (my

favorite) is firmer, pressed under four pounds for 20 minutes or more.

Serve immediately after pressing and enjoy its bland and soothing freshness, or use in one of the recipes that follow. For longer storage, float blocks of tofu in a covered pan of water in the fridge. One cup of soy beans will yield about two-thirds cup of tofu.

Well done, Grasshopper. Your tofu making will improve with time. In fact, were you to venture to the East, you might even be considered a tofu master . . . with as little as seven or eight years of practice.

## Scrambled eggs with tofu

I generally prefer using tofu in Asian cooking, but in fact it goes well with a wide variety of cuisines. Perhaps the simplest dish is scrambled eggs with tofu.

Scramble eggs in the usual way, but when about half-done, add an equal volume of crumbled tofu. Continue cooking and serve hot, garnished with chopped green onions, and other goodies if you like. A drop of sesame oil and chile sauce are excellent condiments for this dish.

## Hamburger enhancer

Tofu is a great way to extend (or replace) meat in anyone's diet. It goes especially well in ground meat dishes

such as meat loaf, just by blending two parts ground meat with one part crumbled tofu. The result will be more moist, so decrease any other liquid called for in your recipe. Sure, go ahead and dump that okra stuff right into the bowl.

Are we seeing a pattern of simplicity here?

## Tofu burgers

Surprisingly ancient in origin, these burgers go well with traditional western style “fixin’s” like mustard and tomatoes.

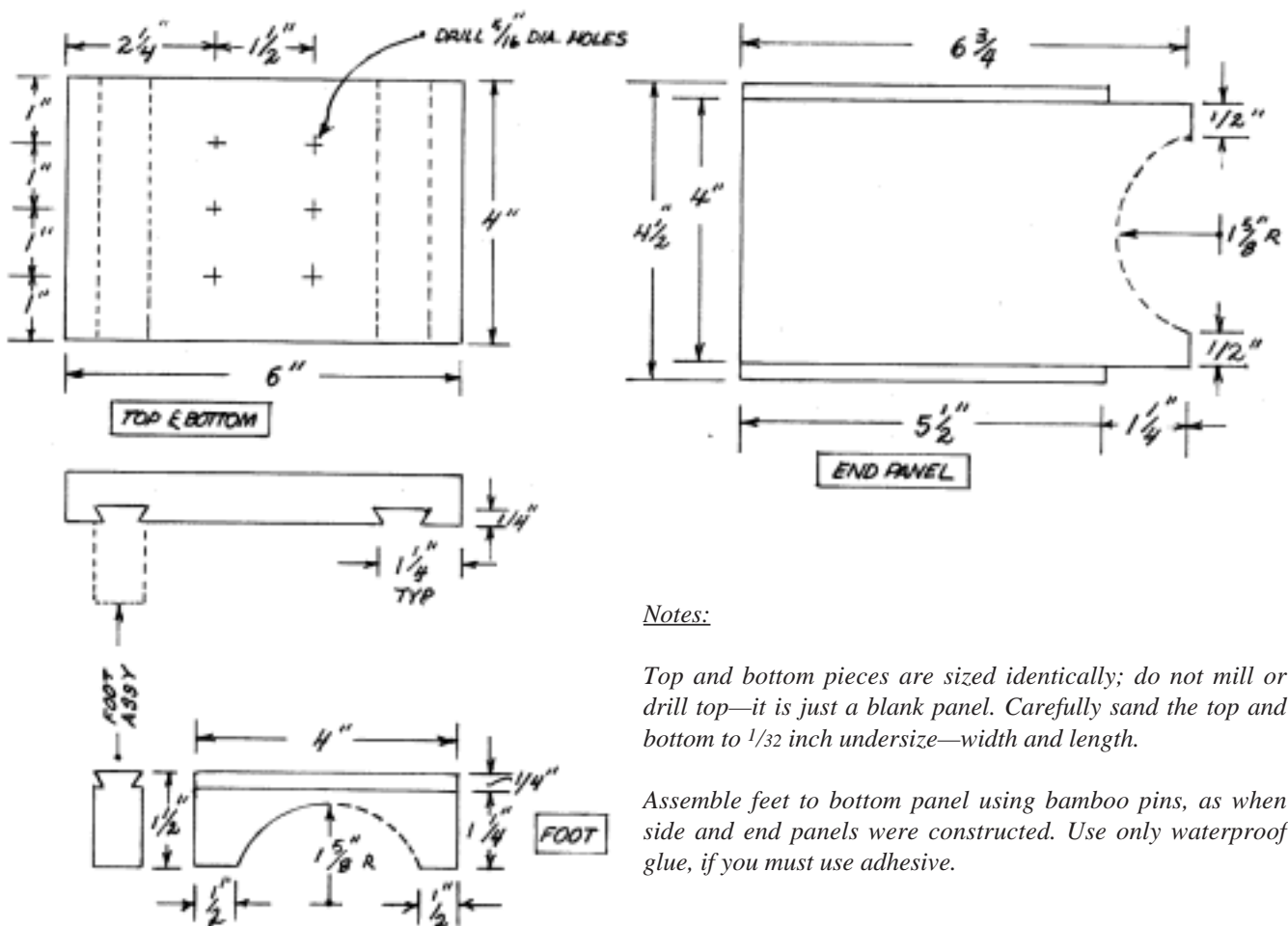
1 pound of thawed, frozen tofu  
(freezing alters its texture to a “meatier” consistency)  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup finely minced onion  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup finely chopped mushrooms  
2 Tablespoons whole wheat flour  
1 Tablespoon crushed garlic  
(or adjust to suit your own taste)

Dash of Worcestershire sauce  
Dash of hot sauce  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon crushed oregano  
Salt and pepper  
1 egg (optional); yolk may be removed

Mash the thawed tofu, add the dry ingredients, and blend thoroughly. Add the egg and/or the sauces and form into patties. Pan fry in a lightly greased skillet over a medium heat and serve just like ordinary burgers. If you like, the patties may be grilled after they’re fried, but I don’t recommend going directly to the grill.

Meatballs? Sure, that works. Sauté, then add them to your favorite sauce at the end of the cooking process. (Prolonged simmering may cause to tofu to separate.) Delicious, although Uncle Guillermo would not approve of my suggestion.

Ah, but tofu is best served in the foods of its homeland. Try a soup for starters:



### Notes:

Top and bottom pieces are sized identically; do not mill or drill top—it is just a blank panel. Carefully sand the top and bottom to  $\frac{1}{32}$  inch undersize—width and length.

Assemble feet to bottom panel using bamboo pins, as when side and end panels were constructed. Use only waterproof glue, if you must use adhesive.

Figure 2. Top, bottom, and end panels

## Miso

Miso, a Japanese condiment typically made from fermented soy, can be tough to find. You may prepare a *very* rough approximation from  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of canned, drained garbanzo beans, pureed with a Tablespoon of salt. Add this mixture, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of real miso, to a quart of simmering fish stock. Bonito stock (look for *dashi-no-moto* in a larger supermarket) is preferred, but any clear, light-colored broth may be substituted. Add a few strips of *nori-yake* (roasted seaweed, sold in plastic packs) or fresh spinach. Now drop in a cup of tofu cut into half-inch cubes, and simmer just until warmed through. Serve immediately, with sesame oil and chopped green onions for garnish.

## Bean curd in brown gravy

Inspired by an old Chinese favorite, this little number will perform to rave reviews on your table. There's no substitute for oyster sauce, but if you insist, use bottled beef gravy.

1 pound tofu, cut in strips or cubes  
1 pound mushrooms, sliced  
1 cup diagonally-sliced carrot pieces, parboiled  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup oyster sauce  
2 Tablespoons soy sauce  
2 Tablespoons rice wine or sherry (optional)  
2 Tablespoons corn oil or peanut oil  
1 Tablespoon garlic  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon cinnamon powder  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon sugar  
Pepper to taste.  
Optional: your choice of dried chile peppers,  
fresh ginger, julienned

Heat the oil in a wok and sauté the carrots until just done. Add mushrooms, dry seasonings, chilies, and ginger, frying for about a minute. Add the tofu, garlic, and wet ingredients, then simmer until hot. Thicken with a Tablespoon of cornstarch dissolved in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of warm water if desired. Serve with rice.

## Baby bok choy with tofu

Substitute any vegetable in season for the bok choy: broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, turnips.

3 cups baby bok choy, cut in half lengthwise  
or veggies of your choice, thinly sliced  
1 cup of chicken or vegetable stock  
1 pound tofu, sliced or cubed  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sliced water chestnuts (canned is OK)

2 Tablespoons cornstarch, stirred into  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup stock or water  
2 Tablespoons soy sauce  
2 Tablespoons oil  
1 Tablespoon fresh ginger, cut into thin "coins"  
1 Tablespoon sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon five-spice powder  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper  
Red chilies (optional)  
Crushed garlic (optional)

Heat the oil and sauté the sliced bok choy or other vegetables. Add the chilies and ginger when the veggies just wilt. Stir in the dry seasonings, frying for about another two minutes. Add the stock, garlic, water chestnuts, and tofu. Then reduce heat and simmer until hot. Stir in the cornstarch mix and serve immediately, accompanied by rice or noodles.

## Making a tofu press

You can make your own tofu press, with simple materials and in very little time. In an era when technology seems so far beyond our grasp (please don't ask me how my VCR works), something as simple as this is truly a joy to build.

Use your favorite lumber, but it must be close-grained and free of sap or strong odors. Poplar, birch, and maple are excellent choices. Cedar and oak are ill-suited. Pine without pockets of pitch is a traditional choice that would be aired in the sun before use.

Cut the pieces to size as shown in the diagram, then drill the drainage holes. Use a template or fence, placing the holes rather than boring them at random.

After drilling, cut the dovetail dadoes as indicated. Matching dovetails are milled on the box's end pieces. Work carefully, and use a router if you have one; these joints are strong, and they square the box precisely if your cuts are true.

The top and bottom pieces, which are never attached to the box, are built the same way. Note that the bottom piece has "feet" that extend past its sides. When in use, the body of the box will rest on these feet, allowing its contents to drain freely.

Give everything a good sanding prior to assembly, then tap the pieces together. You could use glue, and there are waterproof formulas that would work quite well. However, in this case, I've drilled slanted holes in mating pieces, then driven in a piece of bamboo skewer. See how tightly the pieces are locked together?

Your tofu press is now ready for use, or to offer as a gift to family or friends. They may use it for making dairy cheese, as well as tofu. Be sure to brand your name upon this simple homestead servant, that others may share in your delight in honest craftsmanship. Δ



# THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

(Believing it is important for people to be able to laugh at themselves, this is a new feature in *Backwoods Home Magazine*. We invite readers to submit any jokes you'd like to share. There is no payment for jokes used.)

## *Backwoods Home Magazine* Readers' Survey

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Billy-Bob

☐ Billy Joe

☐ Billy-Ray

☐ Billy-Sue

☐ Billy-Mae

☐ Billy-Jack

(Check appropriate box)

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (if unsure, guess)

Sex: ☐ M ☐ F ☐ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

Shoe Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Left \_\_\_\_\_ Right \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation:

☐ Farmer

☐ Mechanic

☐ Hair Dresser

☐ Un-employed

☐ Dirty Politician

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

3rd Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Lover's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Lover's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship with spouse:

☐ Sister

☐ Brother

☐ Aunt

☐ Uncle

☐ Cousin

☐ Mother

☐ Father

☐ Son

☐ Daughter

☐ Pet

Number of children living in household: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children living in shed: \_\_\_\_\_

Number that are yours: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (If not sure, leave blank)

Education 1 2 3 4 (Circle highest grade completed)

Do you ☐ own or ☐ rent your mobile home? (Check appropriate box) \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of vehicles you own

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of vehicles that still crank

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of vehicles in front yard

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of vehicles in back yard

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of vehicles on cement blocks.

Firearms you own and where you keep them:

\_\_\_\_\_ truck

\_\_\_\_\_ bedroom

\_\_\_\_\_ bathroom

\_\_\_\_\_ kitchen

\_\_\_\_\_ shed

Model and year of your pickup: \_\_\_\_\_ 194\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a gun rack?

☐ Yes ☐ No; If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Newspapers/magazines you subscribe to:

☐ The National Enquirer

☐ The Globe

☐ TV Guide

☐ Soap Opera Digest

☐ Shotgun News

☐ Backwoods Home Magazine

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of times you've seen a UFO

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of times you've seen Elvis

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of times you've seen Elvis in a UFO

How often do you bathe:

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Not applicable

Color of teeth:

☐ Yellow

☐ Brownish-Yellow

☐ Brown

☐ Black

☐ Not Applicable

Brand of chewing tobacco you prefer:

☐ Red-Man

How far is your home from a paved road?

☐ 1 mile

☐ 2 miles

☐ don't know

## Winterize your animals without going broke

By Jackie Clay

There is much we can do to get our animals ready for the winter, without going broke buying commercial feed and equipment. Two of the heat-producing factors that many don't think about are feed and water. Abundant good-quality feed, as well as readily available unfrozen water, will do much to keep animals warm, satisfied, and healthy.

It's been said many times that "you can buy eggs, meat, and vegetables cheaper than you can raise them on a homestead." Well, yes...and no. Sure, if you run out and buy all your feed, straw, shavings, and the most expensive equipment available, you probably won't save anything in raising your own livestock and vegetables, but you *will* eat better quality food free of chemicals, hormones, and antibiotics. That should save you some on your family's personal health bill.

In past years I have raised dozens of pigs, cattle, and poultry and had to buy very little feed. How?

First, I went to neighboring grain terminals and asked if I could sweep their

bins, railroad tracks, docks, and walks every week in exchange for the spilled grain I removed. At first they were skeptical, as some less honest folks had been sneaking around, stealing grain. But I left my name and address, as well as a few character references, and in a week I received a note telling me I could begin on Wednesday. The beginning was a bit slow. I had to drive 50 miles one way and be finished by eight o'clock. But I began hauling home 500 pounds to a ton of grain—wheat, sunflower seeds and corn—home every week. As my good reputation was noticed, I was "invited" to sweep better locations, netting more grain. Then neighboring terminals let me work their locations. Sometimes the sweeping was very scant. Other times I netted over a ton at a time, requiring a return trip the next day. In addition, I went to the city grocery stores and asked for rejected vegetables for pig food. I ended up picking up a truck load every Monday. The pigs and chickens loved the produce, especially in the winter. A friend developed

a contract with a pizza plant and fed his pigs and cows baked, but rejected, pizza crusts. We both developed contracts with Taystee Bread to pick up "animal food" bread by the hundred pounds. We had to pay a few cents a bag but it was definitely worth the stop as they became more cheap calories/winter heat.

Another friend planted two acres to turnips. Their family harvested all

they could eat then turned the hogs out onto the field. The hogs first ate the tops then began digging the roots—which they did all winter long—a great saving on feed costs. Planting summer crops such as rape (now called canola), amaranth, or millet will also do much to cut feed costs for poultry as well as hogs.

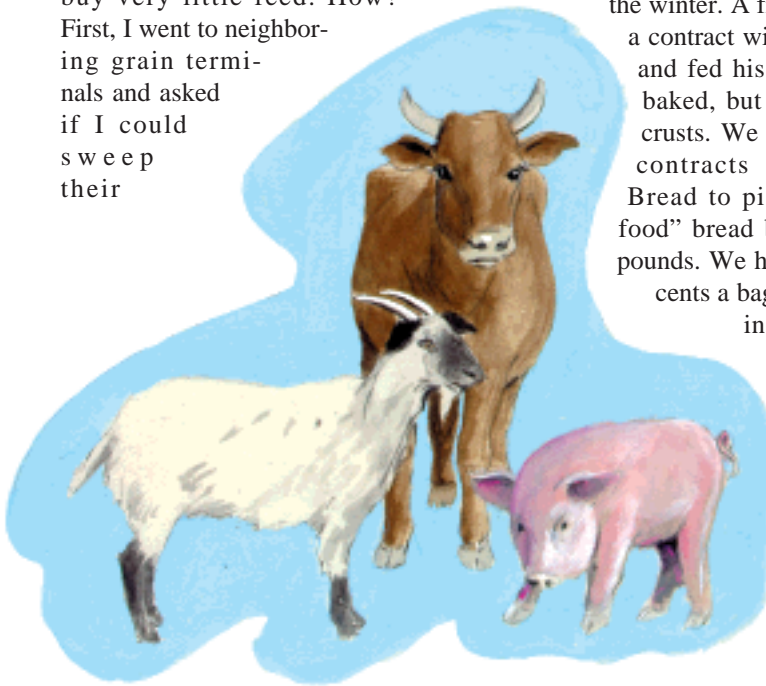
We have always raised or gleaned crops for our homestead animals, maybe not the total feed, but anything helps.

Always asking first, we have gleaned crops after harvest, or after the thinning of crops such as cabbage, corn, squash, pumpkin, navy beans, cauliflower, carrots, rutabagas and apples. At home we raise extra crops for the animals, such as pumpkins, squash, corn stalks, and even weeds. They may be weeds to us but they are much appreciated by the animals and poultry as tasty, nutritious snack food. And this feed keeps animals warm in the winter, as they chomp away, filling their stomachs with nutrients and calories.

One has to keep an active mind, full of inventiveness, to find these freebie feeds. Depending on where you live, the possibilities are limitless in these days when folks throw out everything that is not "perfect"—and a lot of things that are.

I've fed my poultry and livestock on everything from screenings (the grain bits and bits of chaff, leaf, cob, etc., that do not pass through the screens when grain is cleaned prior to storage) picked up for the asking at local grain elevators, to pumpkins picked up at no charge the day after Halloween at city super markets, to pea vines from a local canning factory.

The point is to think "livestock feed" and develop sources for feed besides the sacks you buy up town. It is necessary to be somewhat scientific in feeding these "found" feeds to be



sure your critters are receiving a balanced diet. One great help is checking out Feeds and Feeding by Morrison, usually found in your local library, or through inter-library loan. This gives the nutrients of practically every feed known.

I haven't found a source of free or very cheap hay. The best we've done, besides raising it ourselves, is offering to help haying in return for a portion of the harvested crop. Many times a farmer can use someone to buck hay bales on the wagon, the stack, or in the barn after those darned kids have grown up and moved to the city. But, after a bargain is struck, be prepared to work long and hard for your hay—sweat equity.

When buying hay, be sure it is free of dust and mold. The hay should be greenish, fresh smelling, and not contain black or bluish mold spots. A ton of good hay is worth four tons of moldy hay, plus your animals won't be susceptible to the respiratory problems they will encounter with moldy hay. Once home, it's up to you to keep it in good shape. Barn-stored hay is best, as the weather cannot reach it. Lacking a barn, pile it tight, square, and on top of a platform of old tires, logs, or whatever, to keep the bottom off the ground. The first layer should be stacked on its side to keep the twines off the ground and help keep the hay from wicking moisture. After stacking, cover the top and weather-sides if possible with tarps, well tied down against blustery winds. A few old tires or logs on top will help keep it in place.

As for winter water, either provide fresh, warm water twice a day or provide insulated waterers which remain ice free. Large watering tanks can be kept ice free by doubling them up—a smaller tank nested inside a larger one with old hay packed around in between and boards laid on top to keep the old hay from being eaten. Likewise, half of the tank can be covered by a sheet of plywood with blue-board insulation, a high density plastic foam, affixed to the bottom side of the

plywood using Liquid Nail. An electric tank heater will keep the water from freezing in extreme climates, as will a propane or kerosene heater meant for this purpose.

Here, with zero temperatures common, but not the norm, we get by by chopping the ice on top of the tank twice a day during cold spells. Smaller animals can benefit from either changing the water twice daily or using an insulated or heated watering container. In the chicken coop, we've used a light bulb hung over the waterer which was insulated in a Styrofoam cooler to keep the water thawed and slightly warm.

Adequate dry, clean bedding will also help keep animals warm, and warm animals will do better on less feed than shivering cold ones. Such beddings as shavings or sawdust, covered with a deep layer of straw, will provide much comfort. Drafts need to be eliminated for the same reason. Building a windbreak out of old fence posts, sheet metal, or a living wind-

### *A country moment*



*Brandy Rodenberg, age 3, of Waterloo, IL, holds her baby duck.*

break of shrubs and trees will do wonders for keeping animals warm and cut your feed costs as well. Δ

### *A country moment*



*Trevor Graves, age 1, of LaFollette, TN, shares his drink with friend.*